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MUNCHAUSEN XX

1. Wit and Humor. Germain.

PWD
50
2

ANNEX

NGV
Munchausen

Munchausen XX

Munchausen XX

by

THE BARON

Being wondrous but veracious happenings which befell my ancestors, here translated and for the first time printed from manuscripts found most miraculously by myself

CONTAINING, AS WELL, AND AS PERSPICACIOUSLY SET FORTH, NOT ALONE MY ADVENTURES IN SECURING THESE REMARKABLE DOCUMENTS, BUT A VERY ENTRANCING AND ENTERTAINING SERIES OF THRILLING INCIDENTS THAT TOOK PLACE IN MY LIFE PRIOR TO AND WHILE SEARCHING FOR THE GLORIOUS CREATURE WHOSE HUSBAND I BECOME AS A FITTING CLIMAX TO A CAREER SO UNCEASINGLY FRAUGHT WITH DANGER

The full force of these heart-stopping episodes is brought nearer and clearer to the reader who combines with the text the clever

Illustrations

by

MR. RICHARD HARVEY CURTIS

CHICAGO

1904

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CHICAGO

GENEALOGY

OF

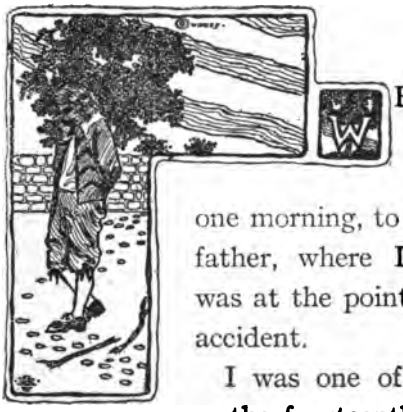
Munchausen XX

1. Ka In begat
2. Fabel; who begat
3. Fa Ker; who begat
4. Pur Ju Ry; who begat
5. Fal Seh Ood; who begat
6. Tru Thless; who begat
7. Li Ing; who begat
8. Li Ur; who begat
9. Fay Re Tales; who begat
10. Fik Shun; who begat
11. Sto Ry; who begat
12. An, An Ias; who begat
13. Wha Pur; who begat
14. Ala Din; who begat
15. Sin Bad; who begat
16. El Ra Shad; who begat
17. Mun Chaus Sen (the elder); who begat
18. Mun Chau Sen (my grandfather); who begat
19. Mun Chau Sen (my father); who begat
20. Munchausen (myself).

Munchausen XX

I

Statement of the case, containing facts, figures, dates, and circumstances that constitute the reason for and the beginning of this history—my father's demise; his legacy; some youthful happenings incident to the legacy, the possession of which was exceedingly difficult.



WHEN I was about five years of age, I was summoned, one morning, to the bedside of my father, where I learned that he was at the point of death from an accident.

I was one of fourteen children —the fourteenth; seven boys and seven girls, the girls and boys alternating until I was reached.

I was very much surprised, upon entering the room in which he lay, to observe all the other members of the family leave, and close the door. This, I afterward learned, was by my father's special direction. While I had been favored by him in many things, it had seemed to me I was the recipient of more chastisement than any of my brothers; and, yet, I must say I was indulged much beyond my deserts.

I had one serious fault—at least, it was so considered by the good old dames of the neighborhood, who prophesied all manner of evils should befall me, in magnitude from being hung to being torn asunder by wild beasts, through all the gradations of torture that may flit through the mind governed by superstition.

I presume I might as well make a clean breast of the matter, in order that the reader may not be misled into a false conception of the situation in which I was placed during my boyhood days, and say that I was known, throughout that particular community, as the "Prince of Liars"; in fact, it had been said, and often in my very hearing, that Truth and I were total strangers, with no possibility of an acquaintance springing up between us.

Strange to say, my father never chastised me for failure to speak truly, and would, as I thought, look upon me with approval when I asserted as a fact something which could by no possible means have happened.

To continue the history.

My father motioned me to his side and handed me a package, saying:

"My son, here is a package which you must not open until your twenty-fifth birthday. Upon that day, you will open this package and read the instructions contained in it, and I ask you to follow those instructions closely. You must guard this package as you would guard your own safety and yield its possession to no one, not even for one moment."

I took it, observing that it was very light of weight and seemed certainly not to be momentous, if considered from that point of view.

II

I here give further insight into my character for the delectation of the reader, recounting in precise and careful manner a short story concerning an experience that I had while waiting for the arrival of my twenty-fifth birthday.

I NEED not detail all the vicissitudes through which I passed before I reached that day of all days, my twenty-fifth birthday. I may simply say, that, owing to the fault above mentioned, I was thrown upon the world with such force that I hit it good and hard, after my father's death, and that the world and I seemed to find nothing in which we were in perfect harmony. I speak of the talking world; for with Nature I never had the slightest trouble—she understood me and I understood her. But nobody had any faith in my word, notwithstanding I never promised to do a thing which was not done. That very trait of character saved me from starvation on several occasions, one of which I may mention.

I was out in the country, among the mountains,

and àn eagle was carrying away a little child. I was near at hand as the bird got its prey, and I was then about ten years of age. I had been practicing with a sling and was traveling alone the mountain road from house to house, having had nothing to eat for several days. I had just gone into the barnyard of this particular house, when the bird of prey swept down and I heard the cry of the child and its mother.

I ran to where she stood, wringing her hands and screaming.

"Do you want the child?" I asked.

She turned her tear-stained face upon me with a look of astonishment, undoubtedly produced by my question.

"Yes, yes!" she cried. "But he is lost!"

"No," said I with the greatest calmness, "I will get him for you."

The bird was now far up in the air. I slipped a pebble into my sling, whirled it about my head, and shot the missile upward.

It caught the eagle just behind the ear and stunned it so that it stiffened its wings and began to soar gently downward. I had intended merely to stun it, and now put another pebble in the

sling, for use when I saw the bird was beginning to recover. I, of course, knew it would never do to kill the bird in the air, for then the force of the fall from that height would most certainly injure the child severely if it did not kill it outright.

As the eagle showed signs of returning to consciousness, I sent forth the other pebble upon its errand of mercy and hit him in exactly the same place, but upon the other side of his head. This changed his direction just sufficiently to bring him gradually back, until, at last, he settled softly down, leaving the child in the very spot from whence he had taken it. I rushed up and hit him a smart rap on the top of the head and victory was mine.

It was the telling of this story at other places where I applied for assistance that caused them to set the dogs upon me, to threaten to shoot me, or to burn me at the stake.

I mention this incident in my variegated career to show that the brain of the ordinary mortal is powerless to comprehend the abilities of some people.

III

I here chronicle the arrival of my twenty-fifth birthday and give the reader some little idea of my mode of life, retailing for his especial benefit the trouble I had in regaining possession of my treasure which I had hidden so carefully; informing him also of the manner in which my ingenuity came to my aid in getting at the contents of the box.

AT last my twenty-fifth birthday arrived, and I went into the woods to an old hollow tree in which there was a hole large enough for me to enter, and having ascertained, by careful inspection, that I was unobserved, I entered. Climbing up some twenty or thirty feet, I thrust my hand into the hollow of a limb which extended at right angle from the trunk, to get the package I had carefully placed there sometime before.

I felt my hand firmly grasped and a thick astonishment fell upon me, as I sought to ascertain the cause of the pain which I now felt tingling up my arm. I tugged and pulled and gradually

began to withdraw my arm, bringing with it whatever it was that held it.

As I continued my exertions I soon saw two gleaming eyes.

This so frightened me that, for once in my long and eventful life, I lost my head, so to speak, and likewise my foothold, and should have fallen had I not been in the death-grip of some fearful monster.

I renewed my wiggling and twisting and jerking, by dint of which I continued slowly descending until I was opposite the opening through which I had entered, and out of this I struggled, drawing my enemy after me.

By getting a good purchase against the tree, I started the great serpent, as I now saw the thing to be, through the aperture.

He now ceased his reluctance to follow me, evidently being now determined to help matters along by coming out himself, and within an incredibly short space of time there was so much of him coiled upon the ground and around the tree that it was impossible for me even to estimate his enormous length.

But, behold my horror! For now he had coiled

himself firmly, and while holding me some twenty or thirty feet from the ground was proceeding to draw me into his cavernous throat, in spite of my frenzied efforts to combat him.

My horror did not reach its climax until I found my head and shoulders surely entering the terrible maw.

It makes me all goose-fleshed to think of it—it was a terrible experience. Finally he had swallowed me, and I fell with a slippery thud to the point where his body was coiled upon the ground.

I was still vigorous and was struggling desperately; so much so that the serpent seemed to be suddenly filled with a great questioning as to whether he had not made a serious mistake.

In threshing around within this cave my hand struck something which I quickly ascertained to be the package I had sought. I hugged it tightly to my breast, for the moment forgetting my danger.

The air was becoming stifling, as you may well imagine, and I soon became desperate. I ran my hands through all my pockets, in a vain search for my knife which I had left somewhere. The only thing I found was a mouth-organ. I

scratched the wall of his stomach with this most fiendishly, but it had no effect.

Thinking of another pocket upon the inside of my shirt, and it requiring the use of both hands to unbutton the shirt and get inside, I put the organ between my lips. I presume I was short of breath, for I had been quite busy, and in trying to get my breath I drew the air through the organ and made a note or two.

I was surprised to feel the actions of the monster at this moment, and I withdrew the organ from my mouth to observe them. As I did this, the action stopped.

I then blew the good old tune of "Yankee Doodle," and the contortions of the snake were tremendous. He swayed and writhed and seemed to be catching my feet in a terrible grasp, and I soon became aware that I was being pushed rapidly upward by the contractions and expansions of the muscles of his body below me.

I had been conscious that the serpent had been all the while traveling, but I had not noticed in what direction, and when my head was projected from between his enormous jaws I saw the earth very far below me. I then observed that he was

upon one of the tallest trees on the peak of a mountain and had extended himself into the air as far as he could above the tree top, his body, however, reaching almost to the ground.

I was therefore in a frightful dilemma; for, if he should spew me forth into the atmosphere, I should surely be killed by the fall. My natural ability to meet any emergency came at once to my rescue, and as I came forth I curved myself around his under lip and grasped his body firmly with both arms. His skin was slimy, and had it not been that he had wrapped himself around an immense tree in various directions, thus forming undulations which permitted me to slacken my speed at each depression, I should most likely have been crushed on striking the ground. As it was, I landed gracefully upon my feet.

As you can imagine, I was heartily glad of my escape from such a terrible death as had so lately confronted me, and happily pursued my way with my prize in my bosom.

I entered a secluded nook and prepared to open the package.

After removing the paper which formed the outer covering, I found a tin box, the lid of which

had been carefully soldered down. As the reader already knows, I had lost or mislaid my knife and, therefore, had nothing with which to open the box. My disappointment was intense. It had become so hallowed an object I dared not crush it with a stone, which I refrained from doing upon that ground, and upon the further ground that I knew not its contents and feared to damage them by such an operation.

At this point I was attracted by a noise behind me in the woods. My curiosity overcame my disappointment and I hastened away to discover the cause of the disturbance.

In a little glen, I saw two monstrous stags engaged in battle. They rushed together with such force that the striking of their antlers caused streams of fire to fly forth. Though I stood quite near them, they were so intent upon each other's destruction they observed not my presence.

As I viewed the combat, a happy thought struck upon my mind.

I was by nature very agile, and as the stags came together at the next onslaught I so held my box as to permit a stream of fire from their horns to fly upon the solder on one side of the

lid, and so great was the heat therefrom that the solder quickly melted and ran upon the ground. By turning the other side and ends in quick succession, I soon left my angry friends, for such they had been to me, and betook myself to my retreat, with the lid in one hand and the box in the other.

I seated myself upon a log, which lay upon the edge of a precipice, as I now may state, although at the time so absorbed was I in solving the mystery I did not observe that fact.

The first thing I came to in the box was a sheet of paper, carefully folded so as to fit snugly therein. Just as I had withdrawn it, some insect, probably a wasp or a yellow-jacket, stung me so sharply upon the foot that I lifted that member with enough animation to throw myself backward from the log and over the precipice.

With an intention to stop my progress through the underbrush, I had loosened my hold upon the box and also upon the paper. I caught upon a root and held on, thus hanging suspended between heaven and earth. As I glanced about me, I saw the paper floating off upon a gust of wind, wending its way I knew not whither.

I gazed with longing eyes upon it. But my longing was superseded by determination as I remembered my bow and arrows, which I always carried with me.

Quickly adjusting a heavy arrow I sent the bolt speeding onward. I did not wish to tear the paper; for, in so doing, I might destroy the message it contained. In avoiding this I was favored by the great distance to which the paper had flown. I had given the arrow such a proper upward curve it came gently down upon the paper and carried it softly to earth by the pressure, only, of its own weight.

To extricate myself from my dilemma and recover the paper I set myself about, and it was soon accomplished; for, finding the root upon which I had lodged extended a great distance along the cliff, I had but to cut one end of it and climb down it as it hung suspended.

IIII

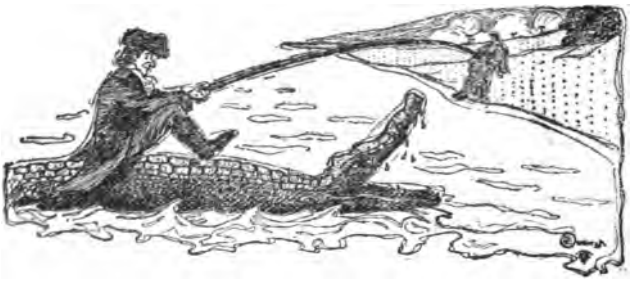
Showing how Dame Nature's motherly attempts to thwart the proper impulses of a youth were of no avail in the instances under narration. Also giving various tidbits of history which will certainly interest the adventurous and energetic, illustrating how the truly ingenious is never at a loss for an expedient to carry him over the greatest obstacles.

ONCE more on solid footing, by the aid of my compass I laid out my course toward the paper.

I had not traveled to exceed two hours upon my journey, when I came upon a great river. As I had never learned to swim I was much put out for an instant, until I saw an enormous crocodile sleeping on the bank. With another of my arrows I despatched a rabbit, which I deftly skinned and spitted on the end of a long pole.

Securely seating myself upon the back of the sleeping Saurian, I gently twirled the carcass of the rabbit before his nostrils. He awoke with a start and threw open his terrific jaws to grasp the

tempting morsel. But I was prepared for him and kept the bait in such position that in attempting to secure it he started into the water and safely carried me across to the other side, at which point



I turned him around, threw the rabbit into the water, at the same time dismounting and hurrying on.

I had still several miles to go, but was worn with fatigue and would gladly have lain down for a rest, had not the remembrance of the precious document goaded me to press forward.

Again laying out my course—for I had varied it slightly in search of a good landing for my ship—I proceeded.

The pain of the poison deposited in my foot by the insect rapidly became so great that I was compelled to sit down and rest.

I had traveled a great while, and was now overlooking the country from another precipice. It is impossible for me to describe my delight as by the aid of my magnificent field glass I was enabled to discover the paper with the arrow still resting upon it. It was yet at a great distance in a direct line and I should be compelled to travel around the mountain, or across its top, before I could reach it.

Looking about me in dismay, I discovered a huge log, many feet in diameter, upon which there was a thin, tough bark. In a short time I had a section of this bark removed and carried out into the sun. It being green I laid it with the curved side up, and when the warmth of the sun had made it flat and smooth, I pushed it to the edge of the precipice, and, by the aid of a long pole, launched it upon the air, myself sitting quietly in the center of it. I had provided a long, narrow strip of the same bark, which I now used as a rudder. By the aid of this simple contrivance, I sailed to the immediate spot of my treasure.

As I was directly above it, I adopted the tactics of the bird, turning my rudder over and depressing it, thus stopping my airship gently and quietly at the desired speed and at the desired spot.

I said I landed quietly. This is not strictly true, and I have no intention to be inaccurate even in the slightest particular.

Perhaps I depressed my rudder too quickly, or perhaps I had misjudged the inclination of my aeroplane. However it was, I must have produced a gust of wind; for I saw the thing I so much sought making off at great speed.

I quickly tied two arrows together, not being able to resort to my former experiment as the paper was rising and at not sufficient distance. The force of the air had straightened it out and it was sailing away as I had sailed down. I still had no desire to injure the paper, and therefore took careful aim, with such exactness that the arrows met the paper in such fashion that it entered between them and was safely brought to earth.

Going to where it had fallen, what was my astonishment to discover that it had descended within the hollow stub of a tree. The hole into which it had gone was too small for me to enter and too deep for me to reach it with any pole that I could obtain.

I gazed about me for some means of getting it,

for I had neither axe nor saw. I sat down on a stump to meditate, when I heard a noise beneath me. Upon investigation I found the stump was hollow, and by running my hand into it I brought forth a nice, fat squirrel. It then occurred to me that I was dreadfully hungry and was on the point of preparing it as a meal when I thought I might first obtain my document with it.

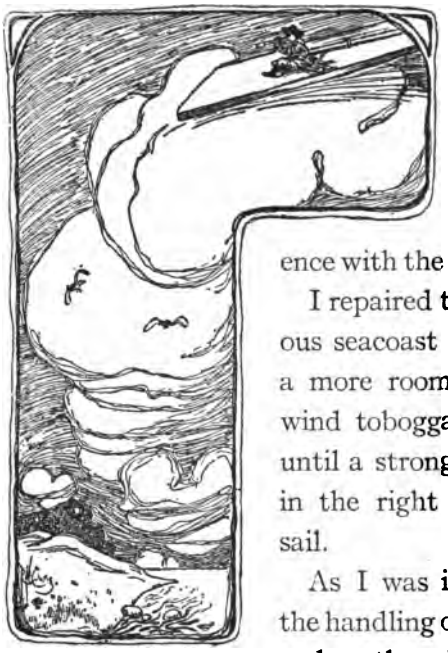
Securely fastening the squirrel to a long string I always carried with me, I climbed another tree into which I had noticed bees entering. I took a stick and ran it into the hole and by deftly turning it around and around I secured a quantity of delicious honey. With this I gave my squirrel a coat and carried him to the top of the stump, releasing him at the mouth of the hole, which he immediately entered with great alacrity. I had concluded that the hole became larger the farther down it went, and when he was down a sufficient distance I jerked the rope with such dexterity that I dislodged his hold, dropped him to the bottom of the hole and bounced him around there. When I withdrew him, which I did most painstakingly, yet with little trouble, as he was somewhat dazed and offered no resistance, I found

the precious paper sticking to him. I removed it and placed it within my inside pocket with much satisfaction.

I then enjoyed my meal of broiled squirrel, honey, and some baked potatoes. The latter were small, as the large ones were probably too heavy to stick to the squirrel's coat. How or by whom they had been deposited in that spot I did not stop to investigate.

After enjoying my repast, I proceeded to read the message, which was as follows:

> My dear Son:
>
> You have now arrived at an age of discretion. You have doubtless learned that "truth is stranger than fiction" and have probably had many queer experiences of your own. My father left a secret with me that I have never dared divulge, because of the strict ideas of your sweet mother. It is, therefore, left to you to exploit it.
>
> In the Desert of Sahara, at Oasis Tel Ali, there grows a bunch of gigantic palms in the top of which is a great egg.
>
> Secure this egg and you will find your reward upon it.
>
> Your affectionate
>
> FATHER.



After pondering the matter a short time, I called into requisition my experience with the bark of the tree.

I repaired to the mountainous seacoast and constructed a more roomy and accurate wind toboggan, and, waiting until a strong wind prevailed in the right direction, I set sail.

As I was inexperienced in the handling of such a vehicle, and as the wind was blowing a gale in my teeth, I soon found myself so high above the earth it was with difficulty I could discern enough of the lay of the land and water by which to guide myself. In fact, I had gone with such rapidity that I was sailing above the Desert of Sahara before I had calculated to have sighted it.

It may possibly be that I was several days in making the trip and that the excitement of it

caused the time to speed so rapidly as to mislead me; for, being so high above the earth, I was in perpetual sunlight, as I am sure the sun did not set while making the passage.

It occurs to me now that the fact probably was that as I started from the Pacific Coast and traveled westward my speed simply equaled that of the earth in its eastward movement.

When I concluded to descend I was compelled to take a circular course in order not to come down too rapidly.

I had scanned the desert for the palm trees, mentioned by my father, by the aid of my telescope, which I had brought with me, the field glass being thought by me too small for the purpose.

I soon discerned three monstrous trees which seemed to have but one top to them all. Finding no other object of the same or a similar nature on the surface of this ocean of sand, I rightly conjectured that I had descried the proper point and so maneuvered my vessel as to reach it easily, when I observed a horde of warriors of the desert gesticulating wildly below me. I saw all this with my telescope, as I was still too far above the

surface of the earth to have made the discovery with the naked eye.

I was not in the least daunted by this discovery, and continued my descent.

The swiftness of the animals carrying those nomads was marvelous, for, though I traveled with greater speed than that of the wind, they seemed to be always beneath my car and were increasing in numbers.

Ever and anon I could see a puff of smoke and hear a little explosion, but it did not disturb me.

Down, down, I came, and when I was within a few hundred feet of the ground I heard a great battering as of hail. The sky was serene and clear. Then I discovered the cause. It was the patter of the bullets of those Arabs on the bottom of my ship. I had wisely provided against any damage by such things by sheathing the bottom side of my carriage with a coating of steel.

When they had shot away all their ammunition and saw that I still descended, paying no more attention to them than I did to the wind, they fell upon their faces in worship, and would not raise their heads from the ground even when I walked in their midst, which I was shortly doing.

V

The finding of the Giant Brain; its message to me; my pursuit of the treasure it located for me; the breaking of the North Pole—all these are given in historic sequence as prefatory to the real adventures, which are given at length in their proper order later on.

AS I made directly toward the three trees the worshipers mechanically made way for me; but when I started up one of the trees there was a loud exclamation. The number of voices being so great the roll of the sound was like terrific thunder, and caused such a vibration of the trees that I should have lost my hold and fallen had it not been I had provided myself with suitable tree-climbers.

I looked down upon the crowd whose heads were up, and they bowed them with such rapidity and unanimity that when they struck the ground they produced a much more violent concussion and vibration than had their voices.

As it was now getting dusk I brought into

requisition the belt which I had prepared. It was of glass and filled with gas, and by sending through it a current of electricity from my storage battery which I carried in my hip pocket there was produced instantly a bright light around my waist, which enabled me to see what I was doing.

One or two venturesome ones had probably observed the illumination and had communicated the fact to the entire assembly; for the awe with which they gazed upon me was so intense as to pin me tightly to the tree.

By a very simple device, which consisted in having three compartments of different colors—red, white, and blue—by changing the current from one to the other rapidly the effect produced upon my worshipers was such as to paralyze them, and they fell over like rags, thus releasing me from the pressure of their gaze.

I was then able to proceed to the top, and was soon within a great nest, such as my father had described. In the bottom thereof was a very black object, which, upon closer examination, had somewhat the appearance of a flattened egg—flattened longitudinally. Upon still closer examination, the resemblance to a human head of

gigantic size became so striking as to lead me to believe the body of a man was beneath, the top of his head merely projecting, and what I had supposed was a nest was in reality a sort of head gear.

However, by placing my hand beside it, I found I could lift it quite readily, and there was no man under it or attached to it. Then I saw the similarity in appearance to a human brain with greater clearness. By shaking it I discovered no indication of any contents. It was also very hard to the touch, so much so I failed to make an indentation in it with anything I had at hand.

It was so large I could barely encompass it with both arms as I prepared to remove it to the ground. How I was to get down with it I could not for a moment imagine. As I stood upon the edge of the nest trying to decide the manner of my descent it slipped from my hands and fell with great force upon a rock.

When my audience beheld me with that thing in my arms they stood up with such precision of movement it seemed they were all fastened together and worked by one electrical button, and when it dropped those nearest ran backward

with such force they were piled ten or fifteen deep before they could get very far.

I at once descended and grasped my prize which I examined minutely and discovered there were open seams in it just as there are in the skull of a man, and with very little difficulty I soon had the skull removed—for such it now proved to be, and I had laying in my lap what was in reality a mammoth brain.

Some peculiarity about it tempted me to examine it critically, which I did with the eye-piece of my telescope.

Judge of my surprise if you can when I beheld upon each prominence of this brain a picture of good size (thanks to my microscope) and I was deeply absorbed in studying them.

As I moved the glass about I seemed conscious of hearing something which I soon found to be but the undulations of light on the part of the brain I was then scrutinizing. I finally concluded that what I really heard were messages from that brain to somebody; but, if so, were in a tongue unknown to me, though I confess to being somewhat of a linguist. It certainly was a very dead tongue as it was a very dead brain.

On looking up I beheld before me one who was, as I afterward learned, the shiek of this tribe which surrounded me. I motioned to him to sit beside me, and, holding the glass where I had had it, indicated to him my desire that he should look through it.

He gazed so long and was so excited I began to fear he would absorb the whole thing, and, impelled by that fear, I exclaimed: "When!"

This startled him somewhat, for he jumped back in surprise.

After gazing at me for some moments in silence, he asked:

"Do you speak English?"

I told him I did and asked him to tell me what he saw or heard when he looked through the glass.

Thereupon he spoke as follows, which I reported in shorthand, verbatim et literatim, at one time having learned the art from Sir Isaac Pitman when he was a lad:

"O, thou of the sky, whose flight is swifter than that of the old eagle; whose movements are more graceful than those of the young fawn at day-break; whose actions are as noiseless as the kiss of the dew upon the tulip; whose voice is as sweet

as the murmur of the rivulet; whose countenance is as glorious as the full-robed orb of night as she rises from her eastern couch; whose mind is as brilliant as the scintillations of the Milky Way;

"O, listen to the words of thy servant, who kneels before thee, who feels the honor a monarch bestows on his subject; whose right hand and whose left hand; whose right foot and whose left foot; whose right ear and whose left ear; whose right eye and whose left eye; whose right nostril and whose left nostril, shall be at thy service; whose mouth shall speak thy messages; whose mind shall think thy thoughts — thy servant of the Desert, We Ali.

"O, listen to the words he speaks unto thee; for they are not the words of his feeble tongue; they are not the pictures of his impotent thoughts.

"O, listen to his words.

"O, listen to the words that come to thee from the ages; that come to thee alone; that tell thee a secret no other man may know.

"O, listen to the words.

"O, listen to the words that came into the ear of thy servant, We Ali, through his eye as he gazed into this magic glass thy hand has produced.

"These are the words.

"O, listen.

"O, listen and learn: In the mountains of Siberia is a place; deep in the ground lies a treasure; a treasure rich beyond imagination; powerful beyond words; there lies a treasure and it is thine.

"O, listen: When thou approachest the place thou shalt know it by its fearful power; for it shall draw metals unto it with great vehemence."

We Ali stopped. I meditated. He was repeating to me a message the owner of this brain had received, and he thought it a message to me.

By the aid of the Arabs I got my ship of state on the nest. Soon there came a great simoon from the north and I sailed away.

As I proceeded I found great difficulty in breathing, on account of the coldness of the air and the speed at which I was traveling. But I had prepared for this, having with me a coil of pipe, beneath which I lighted a spirit lamp; thereupon by breathing through this pipe I got along very well, as the air was warmed sufficiently by the lamp to make my respiration comfortable.

The needle of my compass was drawn downward; but, before I could stop my vehicle, I had

reached the North Pole, against which I struck with such force as to shatter it, and bring myself precipitately to the ground, by which fall I should have been killed had it not been for thousands of polar bears that were huddled around the pole asleep and upon whom I fell. My aeroplane, however, was not damaged, because of its coat of steel.

VI

The truthful statement of the mechanism of the North Pole; the monster gimlet; the flight to Saturn; the race with detachable brains; the Egg-hearts; people who live without eating; and the finding of the dazzling treasure are here given in categorical fullness.

THE point of my compass was now toward the south.

I discovered the sleeping bears were in reality dead ones. I learned it in this way.

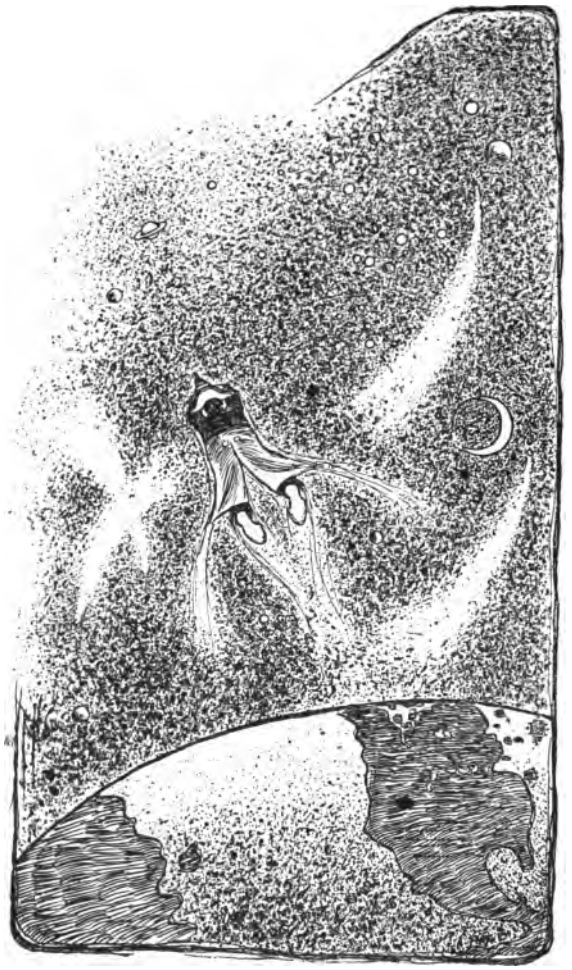
I saw two live bears at a distance coming toward me, dragging between them another one which they brought to the Pole and placed against it.

This aroused my curiosity and, by a close inspection, I found the mystery of the ease with which the earth rotated was solved. The bears were very fat, and, as they were put up tight against the Pole the rotation of the earth gradually worked the oil out of them, and thus served to grease the Pole and keep it from sticking.

As there was no eminence at hand from which to start my ship, for I had broken off the Pole, I was in a dilemma for a short time only. Remembering what the good shiek, We Ali, told me, I ran a wire around my machine, to which I attached my storage battery, thus converting it into a magnet.

Had it not been for the remainder of the Pole I should have shot by on the other side of the earth, as, inadvertently, I had started the current around in the wrong direction; I had made my magnet positive when it should have been negative. I corrected the error and flew with great speed in the direction of the magnetic mountain, against which I should have struck with precipitation, had not the rate at which I went been enough to raise my aeroplane on the air, and I rose to the top of the mountain, which I should have barely passed over had I not released the current at the proper time and landed quietly on the top.

So great was the magnetic power of this mountain my compass was destroyed, the needle having been pulled down so hard as to bend it out of shape. In fact, the compass box itself was drawn so violently as to tear its way through my pocket and strike the ground with a great noise.



Thus I was satisfied I was on the exact spot indicated by the petrified brain. As I knew it was probably several hundred feet to the treasure, I set about arranging a device for extracting it.

Out of steel I formed a gigantic bit or auger with a very slow spiral. By attaching my wires to it properly I made it positive, and it started into the ground at a great rate. At last I heard it grinding on a solid surface. When I made sure it would go no deeper, I reversed the current and it came back to the surface; but it came with such rapidity I did not have time to stop the current, and it went on out and up, carrying me with it, to Saturn, upon which it struck and started in with great rapidity, it having been turned around in the transit. If one of the wires had not broken I presume I should have been carried clear through, out on the other side, and away off into space. As it was, it stopped as I was entering the surface. This little incident led me to the conclusion that Saturn has also a magnetic mountain and I struck upon it, or, rather, in its rings, as it was upon one of them I struck, as I afterward learned.

I was completely filled with surprise when I saw rolling along great numbers of skulls similar

to the one I had found in the Desert of Sahara. Soon there was a circle around me of these queer objects, completely hemming me in, and I began, very quickly, the readjustment of my auger, with the object in view of getting out of there on short notice, as I did not know to what extent these things might go.

I was on the point of turning on the current, when the largest of the number rolled up to my feet and seemed to be trying to communicate with me. I decided to await developments, for a time at least.

I adjusted my eye-piece and set it upon the surface of this thing, and was no better off than before. Suddenly it rolled away at a swift pace, and I soon saw it returning on the top of a giant of terrible dimensions, and I would have turned on the current right then and there, but somehow I couldn't. I was not frightened in the least, but there was something about his face that held me there. I do not really believe I wanted to remain.

Think of a face that was nothing but a monster eye—no mouth; no nose; no ears—just one great eye of a beautiful blue color.

I felt better in a moment, for this eye had such

power I had no difficulty in understanding its messages and it seemed to understand my thoughts perfectly, and we were soon volubly communicating.

I learned that these were the people who inhabited the outer ring of Saturn; that they only used their bodies when they wished to go great distances. They never ate anything; never drank anything; communicated with each other by vibrations only. Their thoughts started vibrations in the ether which affected all their brains alike and instantly. I became so accustomed to their way of talk I seldom spoke, communicating by thought alone. Indeed, speech was wholly useless, and had I remained there long enough I doubt not I should have forgotten how to talk.

They took me to one of the other rings, inhabited by a still more peculiar people, for they had no heads at all. In place of that adornment, they had only one strong arm, at the end of which was a very small hand. Otherwise they were like ordinary mortals, if they had been dressed up. As it was, they were nothing but muscles, veins, and bones.

They had a heart shaped something like a transparent goose egg. They communicated with each

other by the motions of the blood within this egg, which they detected by grasping the other fellow's egg and feeling the blood bubble. They had no lungs, getting their vitality by absorption from the atmosphere. It was perfectly ludicrous to observe a number of these queer people laughing, and they seemed to be very merry. The ebullitions of the blood at such times was terrific, and they would twist that one arm in the oddest manner. I forgot to say they worked their machine, if I may use the term, on the hour-glass principle. The blood went from one side to the other through a hole in a middle partition, and when it all got into the lower compartment the hand would take hold of it and turn the other side up.

But I was not really astonished until I got onto the body of Saturn.

There I found a people very much like ourselves; in fact, in appearance they were just like ourselves; but they neither ate nor drank, and I was much at a loss to understand how they existed, as they seemed to possess all of the parts of a human body. Neither were they immortals; for they were very flashy in their habits and life generally.

I saw a number of these people standing in a

line. Another one had a pump attached to a pipe that led into a pond filled with bright red liquid. As each one came up, he would insert the nozzle of his pump under his left arm and fill him up. I then learned that twice a day they had their hearts filled with new blood, which was found in numberless springs all over the surface of Saturn. By this frequent replenishing of the system with new blood all disease was avoided.

It occasionally happens there, so I was told, that a mischievous one would go to another part of the country and bring a little of the blood that was pumped into the servants or black people and pour it into the spring where the other people replenished. In that case the people who used this tainted spring would be spotted for a while, and so would the one who did it. As soon as the spots began to appear, by changing to another pure spring the blemishes would gradually disappear.

There were springs for all of the different animals, which seemed peculiar to me at first; but I learned that the different animals were the same people trying experiments upon themselves by using different kinds of blood.

One of the marvelous things about Saturn was

the fact there was no night there, the luminosity of the rings being such as to keep it a perpetual day; hence the people never slept there.

Another fact that attracted my attention was there was no heat in the center of Saturn, and that it was all on the surface; therefore, there was no winter; just perpetual spring. The inhabitants told me Saturn was not old enough for the heat to have got down to the center; that it was a young planet; when the oldest inhabitant was a child it was not even necessary to inject blood into their hearts.

So I was satisfied that in all probability they would ultimately reach our state of perfection.

It was quite amusing to observe their consternation when I asked for something to eat and drink. They knew nothing about it, and thought I wanted something to wear, or a wagon, or any old thing but a lunch.

Finding a number of trees bearing very nice apples and a spring of clear water, I began to eat and drink, at which they crowded around me so thickly, and the outer ones pressed with such eagerness, the inner ones were finally pushed upon me, and I was nearly suffocated and crushed.

At last, I got back to my auger, reversed the current and was glad to find myself again speeding toward earth.

As before, the instrument was turned around in transit and it struck in the self-same place; but this time I had presence of mind to stop it at the surface.

I beheld the grand spiral it had made and walked down. All the way down, and it was no mean distance I can tell you, I had no difficulty in seeing where to place my feet, for it was perfectly light. This confused me, as I had expected the deeper I went the darker it would be. The contrary proved true; so true, that when I reached the bottom the light was so dazzling I was compelled to shade my eyes every few moments. When they did get used to the brilliancy, I discovered the cause of it.

The auger had drilled out a large room in a solid bed of diamonds; but the strangest thing about it was, it had, by its swift revolutions cut all the diamonds in proper shape for setting; This accounted for the extreme brightness of the light; it was but the reflections from the countless gems.

When I had become immured to my glittering surroundings, I investigated, and found a very handsome box in a small hole in one of the sides of the apartment.

In this box I found the following documents:

VII

Wherein I give the contents of one of the documents I found in the box, consisting of several Narrations, in which Ka In extricates himself from a dilemma and produces our pleasant and agreeable seasons; the origin of the Ice Age; the real but little known cause of the Great Flood; the lovers with the terrible eyes and the artful maidens; the origin of shaving the face and cutting the hair; the Tower of Babel. Also tracing my genealogy from Ka In to Li Ur, who wrote this document.

THOUGH I have studied all the known languages under all the instructors of prominence, and have acquired their proper pronunciation by speaking each language in all its dialects with the people who used them naturally, I have been compelled to translate the following documents by the application of my wide and varied knowledge thus gained of the idioms of the numerous classes with whom I have come in contact.

I have taken the liberty, in a few instances, to "fill in" in order to embellish the meager language

in which the original is written, believing I shall be pardoned for thus doing when it is understood how much of interest has thereby been added to the narrative. Yet I have endeavored to retain the originality of expression and turn of sentence.

FIRST DOCUMENT

Li Ur, a giant, who was the son of Li Ing, who was the son of Tru Thless, who was the son of Fal Seh Ood, who was the son of Pur Jur Ri, who was the son of Fa Kir, who lived about the time of the Great Flood on the Earth, who was the son of Fa Bel, who was the son of Ka In, the patriarch, sends greetings to all students of the World, and, therefore, of its history, and begs all will take heed, meditate upon, ponder over and deeply consider the following tidbits of knowledge, information and belief gathered from the writings of my fathers.

Hear ye, therefore, and profit by the utterances which have to do with nothing but authenticated and undoubted verbatim reports made by expert stenographers who took the words as they fell from the lips of my ancestors. So great was the

rapidity with which they were spoken and so swift the writers aforesaid, many volumes were spoken and transcribed in a few moments of time.

First Narrative

The first of my narrations is in the words and figures following, to wit, that is to say:

In the days when there was no hurt within, upon, around, about, over and under, in or out of the land, the sea, the clouds, or the air there was a giant who was my remote ancestor. This giant, whose name was Ka In, was a harvester of grain and like seeds. It so happened after laboring morning, noon and evening for about a thousand years his mind was impressed with the terrific thought he would probably be compelled to continue so doing throughout eternity if some change were not determined upon and put into execution; for there was but one kind or quality or state of weather upon all the land from one year's end to another year's end. There was also no rain during which he might rest; just so soon as one crop came to maturity another started and demanded his attention. There was

also no winter during which he might recuperate his wasted strength and energies.

So he sat down upon the threshing machine and thought and thought and thought and thought. Then did he rise up with much determination showing about the edges of his countenance and move rapidly toward the North Pole; for he loved the stars and knew them all by name. He put a great lever against the Pole and heaved away with all his massive power and tipped the Pole over so that it should not all the time point at the same spot in the sky and that the sun should not always shine upon the plains.

Thus it was he had rest one-half the year.

This so amazed the other inhabitants of the earth they were utterly unable to comprehend it and would never have known what had produced the change from one season to four had not Ka In got into an argument with his brother in which he let the cat out of the bag. When he found his brother had told what he had said to his wife he one day caught him out in the field kindling a fire and making an offering to his deity, and caused him to stop breathing for the remainder of his natural life.

Second Narrative

The second narration is even more wonderful, and it relates to this same ancestor, who was a man of renowned achievement.

It came about in the manner following: That he was so much put out by the stories which had got afloat through the wife of his brother he froze the earth up solid with the icy glance of his scornful eye. And when the people roundabout made as if to believe this was the best thing that had happened to them for several hundred years he became so heated with his anger and made such violent use of such warm language the fever of his breath melted all the ice suddenly, both that upon the earth—for the waters of the deep were under the ice and carnivals were daily being held to his great displeasure—but in the clouds, which were solid chunks of frozen moisture held rigidly in the sky. And so it was that the air was full of great rain and the earth was flooded thereby, and no one escaped but Fa Kir, who hastened to the North Pole and builded him a house upon it at such a distance from the earth the water did not reach him, the remains of which still exist to this day as proof of this historical account.

Third Narrative

Ah! But there were giants in the days of my grandfather, Fa Bel. They towered in the air and shook the ground with their tread. And such eyes. When love kindled in their hearts their eyes shone with such brilliancy and power the objects of their affection would have been consumed but for their artfulness; they instantly fell to weeping and such torrents of water fell there were formed rivulets, so to speak, between their lovers and themselves. This would not have been sufficient to protect them from utter destruction had not the fiery glances changed the water into an impenetrable mist which preserved them.

Others were still more artful—those with cold hearts—and always carried large plates of brass so finely polished as to be perfect reflectors. By means of these they sent the glances back with

such increased power (for they were concave) the giants beat a hasty and precipitate retreat.

Each hair of the beards of these giants was of the size of large twine.

Upon one occasion my grandfather, Fa Bel, dropped his false teeth into a well several hundred feet deep. He was in much despair, for they were a new thing in those days and he had become so accustomed to them he would not do without them. My grandmother told him to cut off his beard and she would weave it into a rope by which he could descend into the well and recover his loss. This he agreed to and was soon happy again.

But he was so much improved in appearance by the removal of his beard, had not the other men observed the state of affairs and also cut off their beards, there might have been grievous trouble in all the land; for had these men gone to war their bulk was so great and their voices so strong the shock of conflict would have burst the earth into pieces.

This was the beginning of the custom of shaving the face, which became prevalent in all lands, and also of the cutting of the hair of men.

Fourth Narrative

His sons and daughters were so impressed by this story they sought to provide against another such evil day; and they set about it in this wise.

They went upon a great mountain and raised up a marvelous tower which reached into and through the land of the skies. When it was completed there was joy and thanksgiving, which was all quickly turned to sorrow when it was discovered that this pinnacle gave ready vent for the electricity in the clouds, which came down this shaft with such force it not only paralyzed all their tongues but their brains also, and caused them to forget all the words they had ever used. And they ran away, one by one, to hide, and when they came forth they knew not father or mother, brother, or sister, or friend; and so each was compelled to start a new race; but it also caused the great steeple to crumble and fall away and the winds blew it all into the sea.

VIII

Here appears the second of the documents I discovered in the box, and its amazing contents will satisfy the most fastidious, and will, likewise, remove many false impressions as to the origin of certain things, customs, etc., such as the origin of the pigmies and people of the present stature; the cause of the variety of complexion now existing, both in skin and hair; the albinos, volcanoes, mineral springs, and glaciers. Also traces my genealogy from Li Ur to Sto Ry, the writer of the document here given.

SECOND DOCUMENT

STO RY, who was the son of Fik Shun, who was the son of Fay Re Tales, who was the son of Li Ur, speaks as one having large knowledge of many curious and remarkable but truthful and authentic details which have descended to him by and through his fathers, who were men of learning and renown in the countries they inhabited and among the peoples with whom they dealt and had intercourse.

Hear ye, O, my brothers, and harken unto the wise sayings I am about to send forth for thy

help and satisfaction. For thus it was I was commanded by my ancestor, through his sons my fathers, to keep with great safety and accuracy this historical account of various and divers exploits by him and by them accomplished, that is to say:

By way of salutation then:

Know ye there was a time when the earth was liquid, and so it ever would have remained but for the following circumstances.

A mighty fish swam in the midst of the waters and his length was so great it was curved half way round the globe; so that by constantly swimming in this manner his backbone had become fixed in a half circle.

About this time there descended from Jupiter a man of mammoth stature, so tall, in fact, when he stood within the ocean his head and shoulders protruded above the surface. He had scarcely taken a hasty survey above the tumultuous waves when this gigantic fish observed him and, being almost famished (for it had eaten up all the other fish many months before), it smacked its huge jaws with such relish and vehemence the attention of this man (who, by the way, was my great,

great, great, great, great, great, great, great, grandfather) was attracted toward him. But my ancestor took very little care of his adversary, knowing well his power to undo him at the proper time.

And so it happened when this great fish had approached with consummate stealth and was about to seize its prey, grandfather grasped the top of a high mountain and tipped the earth over so that all the water ran off. Then it was the curvature of the fish's spine was his destruction; for the waters being removed, so great was the weight of his body and so rigid his spine he broke entirely in two and immediately succumbed.

My grandfather at once took from him his skin which he neatly dressed and dried in the sun and ever afterward used as a horn to call his hosts together from the four quarters of the sky; which he immediately did and peopled the earth which was now dry and green and exceedingly fair to behold.

By way of prelude then.

In those old days when the world was peopled with giants there became classes and clans, or

tribes, as they were then known, each of which was composed of the descendants of one man, and they were all such a merry lot life was considered a most excellent thing indeed.

One day my grandfather, to whom I have alluded in my salutation, went up to the North Pole. There he learned the cause of the change of seasons, and finding it exceedingly cold conceived a joke he would play upon his tribe. Thereupon he filled his horn full of the northern air and carried it back.

Now it happened the day on which he returned was bath day and the whole tribe was bathing in the lake. When he was within such distance he could put the mouth of the horn to the edge of the lake he did so and blew softly upon it.

The lake was immediately covered by a coat of ice upon which the people at once stood, for the water was becoming so cold they could not stay in it. He continued to blow on the horn and the people got so cold they began to shrivel up, and had he not at last blown all the cold out of this horn they would have shrunken into mere nothing. As it was they were so small he had to look several times to discover where they were, and he put the

whole tribe in the pocket of his overcoat and carried them to his tent. He tried hard to warm them up and bring them back to their normal size, but it was impossible.

Thus it came about that this tribe became the forefathers of what are now called Pigmies and Dwarfs, and their mixture with the giants produced the present stature of the people of the earth.

By way of interlude then.

There was a time when the complexion of the people of the earth was red and they had bright red hair and beards; and it would have been so unto this day had not the following occurred:

There was a very warm spring in which certain of the family or tribe loved to sport. How it came about, except that some subterranean stream had broken out immediately beneath the lake, it was never known; but so it was while they were all in bathing and another tribe was looking on, the water became fiercely black and very hot. They hastened to the shore, and when they got up out of the water they were all black as midnight and the tribe on the shore became so transfixed

with fear their countenances, hair, and beard changed to an absolute white. All the efforts of the medical force failed to change the first tribe from black or the second tribe from white back to their usual color.

The white tribe held a great caucus and they came in great numbers to debate the occurrence, and thus they came to be called Caucusions or Caucasians.

And so it was there came to be variations not alone in the complexion of the peoples of the earth, but in the hue of their hair and beard.

By way of postlude then.

So it was the mixture of tribes brought about a kind or class of people with eyes so tender and delicate the light of the sun worked them great inconvenience. They were people with pinkish-hued eyes and skin, with hair exceedingly light in color.

Owing to this their affliction they were the ones who were employed to dig wells, as they were thus freed from the attacks of the rays of the sun.

Now it happened one day while they were down

a great depth digging a well the auger slipped from their hands and they listened and heard it strike something far down within the earth.

At first they were much astonished; but being a very inquisitive people they set about investigating the matter. One of them peered through the hole and suddenly rose upon his feet exclaiming he saw daylight. They hastened to the surface and told the people they had dug clear through the earth. But they were not believed, and vast numbers went into the well to look at the other side of the earth, and one philosopher was in high and brilliant feather, for he had maintained most vigorously the earth was flat, though many had told him they had been entirely around it and knew it could not be so. Yet he insisted, because the surface of the other side was likewise diversified, they had been led into a mistake.

Then happened a very astonishing thing. The next day there were gathered in the well as many as could well stand on the bottom of it of this people with the pink eyes, and so great was their excitement they jumped up and down, when the bottom suddenly gave way, and down these people

went. They were sure they would be killed or fly out into space and never get back, one and all, but the bottom of the well struck on a soft and yielding soil and they were not harmed in the least.

But those who had not been down in the well at the time were filled with sorrow and despair and made long lines and dropped them down. At last they felt a tugging at a line, and on pulling it up, along with it came one of their fellows to their great joy.

This rescued one told delightful and beautiful stories about a land which had a delicious twilight always; was filled with sweet streams and odorous lakes; where large trees grew bearing excellent fruit; where were flocks of sheep of a peculiar kind, but very tender and juicy, and other animals equally fit to sustain life.

Such effect had these stories, that with one accord all the pink-eyed people descended into this new country.

In course of time it became a custom with them to celebrate their release from torture, and at such times they made great fires at the mouths of winding natural wells which led to the surface

of the earth. Now, these fires were so fierce because of the draught they melted the sides of the holes and the suction carried the molten matter out into the air.

So it was volcanoes came to be used as a token of joy, as well as to communicate to the people of the earth above that these people were not only still in existence but exceedingly and gloriously happy.

Occasionally some of these people come up onto the earth on visits and they are termed Albinos.

And these people have a great many drinks which they store in great caverns by air pressure, using great electric engines for the purpose of forcing it to all parts of their realm. Once in a while the people of the earth bore down into one of these reservoirs and there spurts up one of these drinks. They are called mineral springs.

By way of finale then.

I am aware, according to the tradition as remitted to future generations by one of my grandfathers, the different seasons are due to the tipping of the earth by one of our ancestors prying over the North Pole. But there is a tradition

which comes down my mother's side of the family, which is so logical and so true to nature and man it deserves a place in the archives of our history. I will therefore be pardoned for inserting it here. I have had reverence at all times for the veracity of the historical account to which I allude, and I desire it understood at the outset I pass no judgment on it, but leave the matter to the reader's acumen and discernment to distinguish and decide between them.

One of the great-grandfathers of my wife (in fact, I believe it was her remote ancestor, who of course must have been related to my remote ancestor) made weekly trips into space.

Now it so happened when leaving the earth on such occasions he did so by way of the North Pole — it may have been the south pole, for our language at that date was so meager it is impossible to discover any real distinction between the word which stands for "north" and the word representing "south," and I am inclined to think at that early date it had not become necessary to make any distinction between the two directions, as the inhabitants were then hardly conscious of direction at all.

But be that as it may, the Pole projected a great distance into space, so that he could run out upon it and use it as a spring-board to gain momentum in starting on his journey.

And so it was one night while on earth in sleep he divulged the fact he had taken to himself another wife in one of the other planets, which knowledge so enraged his wife she went forth in search for a suitable instrument for cracking his skull. While she was gone a servant awoke him and gave him the above information. He, well knowing the capacity of his better half, conceived it a wise plan, a very wise plan indeed, to start on one of his journeys, which he lost no time in doing; but just before he reached the Pole, on glancing over his shoulder he observed his irate spouse coming after him at a tremendous rate, which so accelerated his speed that he made such a terrific spring from the Pole the earth was thrown out of plumb, and it has so remained to this day.

And the narration concludes with the information, which may be safely regarded as remarkably accurate, that his wife was so put out by his escape she vented her spite by hacking viciously at the

Pole, which she thumped so heartily she loosened the masses of ice thereabouts, which immediately began to slide toward the middle of the earth, and have so continued to do down to this date, and they are now termed "icebergs," "glaciers," and the like.

By way of ending then.

I wish to impress upon him to whom this document shall descend it will always be found in company with a document written and compiled by one of my fathers, and no change must be made in the same, not so much as in a single word, for no one could be possessed of sufficient knowledge so to do properly and might by so doing convey an erroneous impression to future generations.

VIIII

Being the first item of the Third Document, and contains the history of the rapidly growing tree with the golden fruit which undid a king and made another. This document, in its several items, gives many startling details of facts and fables not generally known and heretofore unpublished.

THIRD DOCUMENT

STO RY begat An An Ias, who begat Wha Pur, who begat Ala Din, who begat Sin Bad, who begat El Ra Shad, who begat Mun Chau Sen (the elder), who begat Mun Chau Sen the younger (my grandfather), who submits the following Items with knowledge they will be favorably received and conscientiously preserved by his descendants:

Item First

My five-great-grandfather was walking in an orchard one day when he discovered a tree laden with a peculiar fruit. He gazed on it with wonder,

for but the day before he had planted the sprout which had been sent to him by his grandfather. He could scarcely comprehend he was awake and in his right senses, but such was the case. The fruit seemed of gold, and as he was a poor man his heart immediately yearned for the possession of enough of it that he might buy a cow that his children might have milk; to buy a few bees that they might have honey with which to eat the milk; to buy a horse that he might no longer have to walk to the city; to buy a farm on which to raise food; to buy a few sheep to grow wool for clothing; to buy seed to sow, and to buy material with which to build a house, for they were very, very poor and had lived in a cave and subsisted on roots and things like that.

And he went up to the tree, put forth his hand to take some of the fruit, when lo, the tree grew so rapidly he could not reach the fruit. He became frenzied with the desire for it and he put forth such strength to reach the lowest shining globe his arm was lengthened thereby to a length almost sufficient to reach it, but not quite. So he persevered until his arm had grown so long he had not strength in his body to keep it longer in

an upright position and it fell to the ground, from whence he could not raise it, nor did it resume its former length, but remained as it was.

He gazed aloft at the golden fruit, tears streaming down his face.

Then he started off in great haste in search of a ladder, as the tree seemed to have stopped its remarkable growth, and he was forced to drag his arm and hand after him trailing on the ground.

When he had gone a great distance he was suddenly stopped by the king, who was out riding, for the king had not ever seen a man with such an arm. In answer to the king's question as to how he came by it, he told his story. The king immediately ordered one of his attendants to dismount, and had my forefather put on the horse and directed him to lead the way to this wonder, which they very soon reached.

Thereupon the king commanded one of his attendants (who happened to be one of the ancestors of Sin Bad) to climb the tree and throw down the fruit.

When the man began to climb, the tree began to grow above him; he climbed and climbed and climbed until he was worn out with exhaustion

and slid down with such force he lay stunned for several hours.

In the meantime the king ordered his hewer to cut down the tree, which he proceeded to do with a great show of confidence. But, strange though it may seem it is nevertheless in strict accord with veracity, before the chopper could make a second stroke the cut he had made had risen above his reach by reason of the swift growth of the tree; and he was fain to desist after a long and hard struggle to strike the blows quickly enough to get two cuts in the same place.

He was at once beheaded by the order of the king, who was frantic with rage at his defeat.

He then ordered his bridgemaker to tie a chain around the tree, hitch twenty oxen to the chain, and thus pull the tree up by the roots.

Now, this driver of oxen was a vainglorious man and earnestly sought emulation in the sight of his majesty, and it was with exceeding readiness he set about obeying the command. He dextrously switched his oxen into line, and they were lusty ones, and with much adroitness took a lockstitch around the trunk of the tree. Then he reached for his whip, and observed the oxen all

dangling in the air above his head, bellowing with fear and liked all to have their necks broken by the phenomenal growth of the tree. Had the chain not broken by the efforts of the oxen to free themselves, they had all surely been done to death by the tree.

But the extreme weight of the oxen thus hanging on one side of the tree had made a kink in the trunk, and a peculiar thing happened—the tree now grew upward in kinks.

The king was simply beside himself with passion and with his own hand cut off the head of the oxen driver; and he then commanded his commander of war engines to knock the tree down with a battering ram.

Now, this commander had had nothing to do for ages, as the king had hitherto been a peaceable man, and he felt the honor of receiving a command from his monarch so keenly he strutted about the work of arranging the ram for decisive action.

This was a ponderous piece of machinery, had cost many talents of gold, but had never been brought into actual use. It had an ugly-looking ram which seemed powerful enough to have

knocked down a castle with a single blow. It was worked by electricity, and all the commander had to do was to press the button and it would do the kicking.

When all was ready, he pressed the button. The ram shot forward with enormous velocity, only to come at the tree as one of the kinks removed the trunk from its track. And no matter how rapidly the button was pushed, so it was thought, a kink in which there was no tree was always found in front of the shooting ram. So the commander was beheaded, and the king jumped from his horse and danced up and down in a frightful state.

He turned upon my forefather and would have beheaded him on the spot for having told him about the thing, had not my forefather asked the privilege of cutting down the tree. He was at once commanded so to do, and in not very choice language, for the king was so far gone he had entirely forgotten the rules of polite society.

My forefather had been thinking all this time and thinking pretty hard, too, for he felt pretty sure he would not be home for supper that night if the king got no golden apples. And he thought

to some purpose, and had observed the tree very minutely.

He took a long piece of heavy wire from his pocket, quickly placed it around the trunk of the tree, and, though he was carried some distance up before he could fasten it to his liking, he succeeded in doing so and dropping safely to the ground, though it was a goodly jump he had to make.

As the tree expanded in its growth of girth in proportion to its upward movement the wire soon began to cut into the trunk. Thus the tree was caught, for it had now grown to such a height if it did not keep on growing larger around it would become top-heavy and break off at the narrow point where was the wire.

And now the king's pleasure knew no more bounds than did his wrath, and he knighted my forefather on the spot.

The work of the wire was made apparent by the waving of the tree top, which soon became quite visible; but the tree had grown so high when the wire had finished its task, the top fell far out into the ocean, with all its golden fruit.

And now the king did a very mean thing—he directed his sword-bearer to give him his long

sword, which was about twenty feet long, with which he desired to have the honor of removing my forefather's head.

But my forebear was not to be outdone. He grasped the king about the middle with the long fingers of his long hand on his long arm, held him high above his head for a moment, then threw him far out to sea, telling him to bring him some of the golden fruit and he would sit on his throne until he did so, which he proceeded to do, and thereby attained all the things he would have bought with the golden fruit, and many more besides.

So great had been the effort in throwing the king into the ocean, my forefather's arm at once resumed its natural length.

X

Wherein the Third Document is continued, relating here the second item thereof, which has to do with that mighty hunter my four-great-grandfather, and tells how he made a wonderful capture of a remarkable beast in nick of time to save his own life from the headsman of the king.

THIRD DOCUMENT — CONTINUED

Item Second

MY four-great-grandfather was a mighty hunter. So great a hunter was he, he was employed by the king to furnish his zoölogical garden, each Saturday of each week, with a new animal for his royal inspection.

There was but one single restriction on his employment not to my ancestor's liking; but he knew his powers so well he had confidence he would never lose his employment in that manner. The restriction was, if he failed to present the king with a new manner of beast upon any

Saturday he would lose his employment by having his head removed suddenly from his body.

It happened he was, like most young men, smitten by love, and one week he went away to get married, the nuptials not being finished until late Friday night. He had provided, however, against this contingency by capturing two new beasts the week before, thus having one on hand. What was his horror you may well imagine then when he found it had escaped.

There was nothing to do but go forth and capture another, and he was abroad the next morning before there was light enough to see.

He went into the forest at a new place and had traveled many miles without securing anything. Hitherto his practice had been to learn the whereabouts of the animals, then to set traps for them in the night time so he might obtain them without blemish, as it would have been worth his life to have taken before the king an animal marred or injured in any way. But now he had not time in which to set traps, and he knew not where to set them anyway.

And so it was as he was wandering along he observed at a great distance a most curious animal;

for it had a head in front and a head behind, so that it could run either way and go forward all the time. In addition to this it had six legs—two at either end and two in the middle—the last two it could turn either way, so that it could have hind legs no matter in which direction it traveled.

It stopped and viewed him, with first one set of eyes, then with the other, and then with both sets; but kept just the same distance from him all the time—it was a very foxy animal.

He was much put out to discover the impossibility of capturing this wondrous beast. He thought of the thing he always carried with him, but the distance was too great to permit even one of his strength to throw a noose successfully over either set of horns, or in fact anywhere near it.

At last he discovered a great curved rock at some distance beyond the animal, and so maneuvered the animal finally stood beside it. Now, whenever he stopped the creature would stop; so he then stopped, and so did it. He then tied the end of his cord to an arrow and shot it with such dexterity and precision it went beneath the

animal, struck the rock in such a manner it was turned back to him, and he immediately grasped both ends with such rapidity he was soon homeward bound with his prize, and his head was safe from the sword of the king's executioner.

XI

Relating a fish story of no mean pretensions and a fairy tale most graceful and entertaining.

THIRD DOCUMENT — CONTINUED

Item Third

MY three-great-grandfather was a noted fisherman, and one of his adventures may not be out of place here, as it sets forth quite fully the sagacity and foresight of my ancestry.

He was one day sailing to his nets when he observed the buoys moving in a most erratic manner. It was his habit to prepare nets to entrap a delicious fish much in demand at the table of royalty, and he alone of all the fishermen it was who knew the feeding places of this particular fish and had received a royal patent giving him the exclusive right to sell that particular fish in the entire kingdom.

But this season had been very dull, and he had

about concluded the fish had changed pasturage, and had settled upon a plan of action that would locate their new feeding grounds.

So withal he was much surprised to find his nets many miles nearer shore than was the place at which he had staked them but the day previous, and to behold them moving toward him at a steady gait, which could not be accounted for by reckoning the wind, of which there was not a breath at this time.

But his tremendous knowledge of the habits of the denizens of the deep came to his rescue and he veered from his course, let the nets go by, and turned and followed them at such convenient distance he discovered the truth of his conjecture.

There was a class of shark infesting those waters which had an especial liking for the kind of fish he was snaring, and these same sharks were exceedingly observant of his actions, as was now evident from the fact that at either end of the net, holding a stake in his jaws, was an enormous specimen swimming with great swiftness.

Hither and thither went the sharks, carrying the net in all directions. After an hour or two spent in this fashion, my forefather observed the

speed of the net was slackening and he prepared for action, for he conceived the net was becoming so full of fish the sharks could not much longer propel it, and he was satisfied they would soon stop and go in for the feast they had thus prepared.

He was never taken unawares, and so it happened that the large saw fastened to the keel of his boat was brought into play.

And so it was, when the sharks at last stuck the stakes in the bottom, swam out in front of the net and stood side by side greedily contemplating the magnificent feast spread before them, my ancestor bore down upon them swiftly and sawed them each into two pieces so quickly neither of them was aware of it for some time after their tails had wiggled away, and might never have found out what was the trouble had they not looked back to see why their tails did not obey their commands to push them ahead. When they did find it out they were so chagrined they with one accord died then and there, as a just tribute to their sublime disgust with themselves.

And the amount of fish thus taken by my ancestor was so incomprehensible words fail to

convey any adequate idea of its magnitude. There was not a single mesh in the net which did not contain at least one fish, and the net was four hundred feet long and five fathoms deep and each mesh was an inch and a half square. The method of computation is easy, but time is precious.

Thereupon my ancestor became a baron and the title has descended to your humble servant.

Item Fourth

My two-great-grandfather was a wise magician, and, so celebrated was he, wise men of the entire world consulted him upon doubtful questions which he readily solved without a single error in his calculations.

His various experiences when a mere lad with the genii were the foundation of his accomplishments, and in maturer years he made countless discoveries of new and wonderful things. It is my pleasure to regale you with one of these.

He had obtained great wealth by the aid of the curious lamp he had found in the most marvelous manner, but which is of small importance in comparison with what I am about to relate; and

he so considered it, for he gave the lamp to a beggar when he had secured the talisman which is the subject of this sketch.

Then be it remembered that in the land of the Sapphires and Diamonds there lived a princess of such matchless beauty no man had yet looked upon her and survived the fire of the love which was instantaneously engendered within his breast; for he could sleep neither by day nor by night, nor could he eat or drink, but could think of nothing but this lovely princess. And the final end of each was the final end of all, which was by kissing the princess on the lips, for so cold was she the chilling shock to the burning heart produced instant death.

It was the serious desire of this princess when she became queen to wed, and so great was her

disappointment at the death of each and every suitor she offered her realm to the man who should survive her kiss.

It so happened upon the publication of that information in the daily papers of the kingdom, the number of dead bodies in the queen's palace became so great she could not move from where she stood, and suitors were not permitted to make the attempt for the space of six months, it requiring that time to remove and properly bury the dead, which were men of valor and renown, and their deaths were much deplored. No war had ever destroyed so many mighty warriors and statesmen and poets and clergymen and priests and common men in the history of the world.

It was about the end of the six months that my forefather entered the kingdom and became possessed of this information.

Being at the age when all the fires of existence are strong and steady, he would have at once entered the lists had he not been awakened one dark night by the moaning of the wind. Being well versed in the language of the breezes he accurately read the message and without loss of time took to his horse and sped over the moun-

tains. He traveled steadily onward for several days, all the while rising high and higher.

But one gigantic peak remained to be scaled, when his progress was stopped by the great body of a terrible serpent so large in circumference it would have taken years to have built a bridge across it, as it extended several times around the peak.

This serpent my ancestor knew to be the genii which stood guard over the treasure of which he was in search. So, leaving his horse, he crept stealthily along until he found the monster's head and it was sound asleep. He took from his pouch two large burning glasses and calculated the distance with such nicety the fire of the sun consumed both its eyes instantly. So great was its pain it uncoiled itself from about the mountain and rushed off into the valley, not knowing whither it went.

My forefather then bestrode his horse and safely arrived at the edge of the summit.

But here again his progress was stopped by a gate made of pure glass several feet thick and of great height, and which was but part of a fence of similar material that extended entirely around the top of the peak.

Within the enclosure was an extensive, magnificent park filled with large trees, around and among which twined countless vines, each bearing exquisite flowers, each of a different hue and of delightful fragrance. So beautiful was all within and so handsome the fence, he would not destroy it as he easily might have done. So he cast about him for a means of entrance to this paradise.

Now, it so occurred he had brought with him a compound which he mixed with the gum of a certain tree standing close by. Then with his hatchet he formed pieces of wood which he proceeded to place against the glass and which adhered firmly thereto by reason of the paste with which he had coated one side thereof. And thus he made a very comfortable ladder by virtue of which he was soon on the other side, for he made steps on that as he had done on the first side.

In turning a corner in one of the many lanes, he was confronted by ten ravishingly beautiful women, so rich had Nature been in her adornment of them. They stopped him and asked which was the most beautiful one of the ten. He gazed at them critically, and then insisted he was utterly unable to tell, for each was so

deliciously sweet any man would be contented and happy with her. And so it was they exclaimed in unison he was a most excellent man and deserved everything he could wish as his reward, for he had been exceedingly wise in his answer.

He said he could not imagine for a moment any one could have made any other guess than the one he had made, when he was told there had been a princess there some years agone and had been asked the same question. They told him she had replied by selecting one of them, whereupon the princess was stricken with a heart of ice for having preferred one of the sisters above the others.

"A heart of ice!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, yes," they replied; "a heart of ice."

"What is that? The poor princess."

"It is indeed sad," said they; "for she will freeze to death every lover that kisses her lips and she will endure terrible agonies; for every man who looks upon her will be smitten, and she will let him kiss her to test his love, and he will die on the spot, frozen through and through by the shock of the cold of her heart striking against the heat of his heart."

"Too bad!" said he.

"Not so," they cried. "It served her right."

"But is there no cure for this malady?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed," they cried; "and a very sweet one it is."

"What is it?" asked he. "Inasmuch as you have said I deserve everything I wish, I wish that information."

They laughed and glanced merrily at each other, thinking he was trying to catch them in a falsehood.

"First of all, then," said one, "there must come a very brave man; for he must overcome the serpent at the foot of the hill; he must scale the fence of glass, and he must answer our question correctly. And then he must go to the center of the earth and kiss our queen."

"Show me the way to the center of the earth," he demanded.

They laughingly led him to a great hole in the ground, which was as smooth as glass, and he afterward learned it was a glass tube which ran to the center of the earth. As he stood looking down it and meditating they said many had gone down but not one had ever returned.

His quick mind had solved the difficulty, for to the one nearest him he said:

"Will you give me as a talisman one hair from the top of your head and permit me to select it?"

The others became quite hilarious at this, and twitted him on making his first guess a lie.

When he had obtained the hair he turned to the next one and made of her a similar request, and so on until he had a hair from the head of each one. Then he braided them together and asked:

"You say many have gone down but none has returned. What became of them?"

"They have fallen and died, for they knew not how to get down," was their answer.

He then took from his pocket a small phial, removed the cork, took some of the contents on the tips of his fingers and rubbed it on the rope made of the hair of their heads. It at once began to grow in length much faster than it grew in size, and ere he had used the contents of the phial the end had touched the center of the earth.

Then he said to them: "You hold this end and I will go to the center of the earth, and wait you here and hold the rope until I come. You will

promise that, as I wish it and you have promised to grant me whatever I wish."

They agreed. He wrapped the rope about a stick of glass and quickly disappeared.

At the end of his descent he found himself in the midst of a large assemblage, who looked upon him wonderingly, not knowing what sort of a being he was, or seeming not to know. He was led toward a throne which flashed upon him with such brilliance he did not at first behold it was occupied. When he became accustomed to the dazzling radiance of the throne he beheld sitting upon it the most beautiful woman, and she must have been indeed fascinating, for he had never dreamed of one so bewitching, and he was a great dreamer.

It was impossible for him to remove his gaze from her for a long time, and when she spoke the music of her tones held him spellbound. The glances of her eyes were almost torturing.

But he kept saying to himself she could not be more delicious than the princess, and surely not so many men have died for this one's love as have died for the love of the princess; therefore, the princess must be still more lovely.

Thus saying he recovered his composure, stepped to the throne, and began to ascend. Thereupon a murmur arose which made him pause for an instant; but the queen held out her arms; into them he flew and sought to kiss her, but she clung to him so tenderly and cautiously he could not do so at once. He was not to be outdone, however, and lavished caresses upon her until she was off her guard, when he kissed her full upon her red lips. There went a thrill through him he had never experienced and it made him dizzy for awhile, for she did not permit him to remove his lips from hers.

Then came before his mind's eye the poor princess and her torturing condition. His sense of duty to her overcame the blandishments of this fair, sweet one, and slowly but delicately he freed himself from her embrace, saying:

"O, Queen, thou art the most beautiful of all flesh; there are no other lips like thine; no other woman was ever possessed of such an exquisite form; no other woman's voice hath so many charms—thou art the queen of queens."

"Then abide thou here and be my king," said she.

"It may not be," said he, "for I have a duty to perform to one of thy sex who is suffering from a terrible malady, and that duty is greater than thy charms, though none knows their grandeur."

Then the queen drew him gently to her and kissed him on the forehead most lovingly, and bade him sit beside her.

After long and beautiful converse with her, in which she told him she was but tempting him to test his fitness for the mission, he left her with instructions to treat each of the ten maids above as he had treated her—which made him tremble slightly.

When he had ascended to the garden the ten maids were waiting for him and one of them held out her arms to him. He responded with alacrity and she held him so lovingly that for a moment his resolution wavered. But he released himself only to be folded in the arms of another and another until the last one twined her arms about him.

It had been a gallant struggle, but it had ended there had nót the neighing of his horse recalled him to himself.

Thereupon he tore himself away, ran up the

ladder, down the other side, mounted his horse, and they flew down the steep incline with such speed that though the old serpent had returned with new eyes they cleared his body at a single bound and were off through the mountains in the twinkling of a star, speeding toward the palace of the princess.

When he entered the hall but one suitor had been tested and he lay dead on the floor. There followed him in, however, a horde of would-be lovers, of all stations and degrees, but the strict order of arrival was observed, and he stood next in succession.

As he advanced toward the bewitching being his eyes burned and his pulse throbbed with twice its usual power. He was drawn with such magnetism he could not resist. She was even more comely than any of the charmers he had met in the mountain.

He was within ten paces of her and she was looking at him yearningly, when there suddenly appeared between them the ten maids, who asked of her:

"Which of us is the most beautiful?"

The princess queen was undecided, glancing

slowly from one to the other. Then she was bewildered, and at last cried:

"I cannot tell, for you are all so lovely it is impossible for any mortal to say."

Thereupon they clapped their hands and vanished.

Then he stepped forward and folded her in his arms. Their lips met not once or twice, but many, many times. The crowd had expected him to fall dead, and it now roared with rage, for it had not observed the maids and knew not what had really happened, and each had considered that had it been himself that had pressed her lips he should not have died.

So my forefather became the king of the realm and ruled so well and amiably he was beloved by all his subjects, but most of all by the ten fairies, for they were nothing less, who lived on the mountain top and to whom each year he gave a great feast.

XII

Being a continuation still further into the Third Document and giving a careful account of a most marvelous sailing trip in Item Fifth of said Document.

THIRD DOCUMENT—CONTINUED

Item Fifth

MY one-great-grandfather was a renowned sailor, of such repute his name was known in all the countries of the earth. It may not be amiss to relate the occurrences of a single voyage made by him, the like of which has not been met with since nor had been met with before.

He determined to sail around the earth in a straight line, for it was known, even by my remote ancestor, the earth was round. It was difficult for him to get a sufficient crew for his ship, but as he had made a wager with the king, of a thousand talents of gold, he could do it, and offered to divide the result with his sailors,

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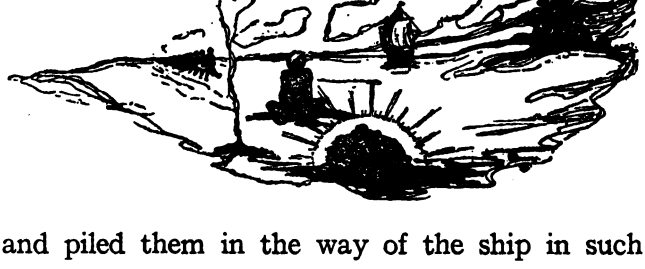
he at last had his ship manned and ready to sail. The last thing put aboard was a great trough made in sections.

He set sail upon a day in June. After sailing before a stiff breeze for many days, land was sighted, toward which the ship's nose was pointed. At this the sailors became alarmed, for they were sure they would be dashed to pieces on the shore, which, however, was a sandy beach. But my forefather kept on his course and when they were within a short distance of the beach, he made known the use to which he was about to put the trough, which was to lay it before the ship in such manner the keel would run in it and as fast as she left one section behind it was taken up and placed down before.

In this manner they sailed until they came to a large lake, across which he kept his course, having again placed the trough on board. When they reached the other side, the trough was again brought into requisition. And so they sailed across the continent and into the other ocean.

When they had crossed this and were once more sailing along the trough across the next and last continent the natives appeared in great

numbers, thinking it was an angel or a god, for the white wings above the boat looked strange and unearthly to them. And so it was to prove their belief they brought great nuggets of gold



and piled them in the way of the ship in such quantities the boat was soon loaded by the crew with such a stock of yellow metal my forefather feared she would sink when she was again launched into the sea. Therefore just before again embarking he hid away a large part of the treasure, which he afterward returned and got.

As they were sailing now toward home he saw the king's navy ahead drawn up in battle array. This he could not understand, but it was soon made plain to him, by reasoning that the king could not afford to part with so much gold and had sent out his ships to sink him should he ever appear. But he nevertheless sailed straight

toward them, which again alarmed the sailors, for by the division of the gold now on board and what had been left behind each was so rich he could hardly wait to get home and begin to spend his wealth.

Now it turned out the king himself was upon the ship toward which my ancestor was sailing, and he made ready for battle; for that was part of the plan he had in mind when he made the wager, knowing my forefather to be a very determined and wise man. My forebear, however, did not know the king was on board, and grieved ever after that such should have been the case.

When he was about a league off he caused to be brought up from the hold some planks which were then formed into a large rudder, which he put behind the ship, but not held as a rudder ordinarily is, it being laid flat on the water. It was now observed the masts were hinged where they entered the ship.

When he had come within about three ship lengths he put a great force on the rudder and bent the masts backward against powerful springs. The pushing down upon the rudder caused the ship's nose to dip down and to enter the water,

which it did with such rapidity it shot clear below the other ship and would have passed without accident had not one of the sailors lost his presence of mind and released the masts just as the boat was coming up on the other side. The masts sprung upright with such speed and force they caught the ship the king was on, threw it high in the air, turning it upside down and throwing all upon it into the sea and they were drowned.

When my forefather landed he went to the palace of the king to demand his talents of gold. He then learned the king had been on that particular ship, and knew he must have perished.

The renown of the voyage spread like wildfire and created such a sentiment nothing would do but my forefather must be made king, and he was crowned at once, and having so much gold his kingdom became the richest in the world.

XIII

Being another item in the same document, and a most interesting one, as it gives some incidents in the life of one of my ancestors who was at some time a Caliph of Bagdad.

THIRD DOCUMENT—CONTINUED

Item Sixth

MY grandfather, who was a Caliph of Bagdad, was an illustrious story-teller, and I should be doing him an injustice to omit from this narrative one or two of the most wonderful of the tales he told.

He was in the habit of indulging in practical jokes and whenever a new idea he could use for that purpose came to him he was prone to put it into operation without delay.

And so it happened a thought of this character came to him one day in midsummer and he invited all his retinue to a month of banqueting. Well knowing the lavish supply he always pro-

vided, his palace was filled to overflowing. To aid him in his joke he had employed a chemist of great learning to assist in compounding the viands, always taking care that while his portions resembled the others closely they did not contain certain ingredients present in the others.

He also arranged for games on the lawns of great expanse around about his palace, and it so occurred that while viewing these his guests were compelled to sit in the sunlight unprovided with shelter from its rays. And it also turned out all looking-glasses were secreted, which caused much dismay in the minds of the feminine guests. And each guest, owing to the brilliancy of the beams, was given colored glasses to wear.

The last half of the month contained a great novelty, so the guests thought, for during that time every window was sealed and every door closed so tightly not a ray of light penetrated anywhere. and all functions were observed in the darkness.

At the end of that time the light was one day admitted throughout the entire building and great was the consternation thereat. Husbands knew not their wives and wives disowned their husbands. Lovers were horror-stricken on the

discovery by each the other was as black as the ace of spades.

Oh, there was a tumult, for each was hastening to leave the place, but he prevailed upon them to remain another week and all would be well. Thereupon he explained to them he was but illustrating the way in which the Africans became black. That he had added to the portions each day a certain amount of silver which had at last mixed with their blood, and that when they came into the sunlight the silver in them had oxidized and made them black. He assured them the portions they would now receive would quickly remove the silver and they would again become white.

And it so happened.

At another time, when he was about to start on a long journey, he called his servants together and instructed them he would be gone some time and they must under no circumstances admit into the palace any stranger unless ordered to do so by his chief butler, whom he had told to put all strangers in certain rooms and to lock them in there.

It turned out he was going away in search of a

certain robber who had been troublesome; indeed, so much so he had carried away such a quantity of wealth he was fast becoming as powerful as he.

And so it was he had been gone but a day or two when a handsome cavalier announced himself and was admitted by the butler, and placed in one of the rooms, he having arrived at nightfall, craving a lodging from an impending storm.

As it was afterward learned, this was the very robber my grandfather was in search of, and well knowing he would not make an attempt on his house while he was at home he had had it thus given out that he was away. So the man got himself into bed, as he thought it as well to do, inasmuch as he did not intend to commence his depredations until late at night, and having some distance to travel thereafter he might thus refresh himself.

About this time the room was suddenly filled with a deep yellow light, and grinning skeletons rattled their bones in every corner.

Now this robber was a brave man, and looked upon these things for a moment with anger at being disturbed of his sleep.

Then as suddenly the light was changed and

the skeletons became so red they had all the appearance of being covered with fresh blood. And now great red hands appeared flying about the room apparently in search of the man. This

seemed slightly to disconcert the thief and he covered himself up with the exception of one eye.

Then the skeletons vanished and large balls of fire raced about the room, and when he saw one of them making for his eye he really became frightened and covered that eye up also.

Now came clanging chains and hideous groans and weeping and wailing most horrible to hear. This so filled him with terror he shivered and his teeth chattered.

In his frenzy, for he was becoming very much excited, he tore off the covering and upon each corner of the bed hung a devilish green monster licking his jaws and eyeing him hungrily with glittering eyes.

He now became desperate and would have fled, but when he made the slightest movement to rise those monsters started toward him, and he hurried beneath the covers.

Then came terrible sounds, the like of which he had never heard, which were caused by the grating together of the teeth of the four monsters and the snapping of their eyes and the smacking of their lips, and he thought the building was on fire.

At last he was so overcome he sank into a stupor and was so found in the morning by the butler, who discovered that what was a man young and vigorous the night before was now an old man with white hair and sunken cheeks and wrinkled forehead, who prayed to be removed from the room that he might die in peace.

My forefather thereupon returning told him he could be removed only on the condition that he return all the gold and goods he had stolen and be a good citizen ever after.

This the man readily promised, and did as he promised he would.

Thus my ancestor not only ridded his kingdom of a pest but recovered his people their lost wealth, and he was much reverenced therefor.

XIIII

Still continuing the same document, and showing what may naturally follow the possession of a remarkable voice.

THIRD DOCUMENT—CONTINUED

Item Seventh

MY father's voice was of such sweetness and strength when he would form his hands into a sort of trumpet and sing into them the very mountains were overcome and cast at his feet their treasures. It was by this means he saved his country from ruination at a time when a frightful panic shriveled all its industries.

The king was in sore distress when one day my father stood before him and asked what he would give to have sufficient gold and precious stones to tide him over his present difficulties. The king looked upon him with amazement, for he was but a peasant and poorly clad. But my father was not abashed, and stood his ground under the gaze, waiting for his answer.

Somehow the king did not desire to wound his feelings by a positive rejection of him, and therefore asked him by what means he expected to supply him the necessary funds. My father did not deign to answer him, but repeated his question.

At this the king became quite wroth, and my father seeing this began to sing a little song which so thrilled the king he was soon in tears. He thereupon answered my father sensibly, saying he could have whatever he asked if he would only relieve his people.

Then my father requested of him as many wagons and oxen as he could spare, which the king sent with him as he went toward a certain mountain and arrived in due time.

When he was at its foot, he commanded the wagoners to stop and he stood on a log, beginning to sing softly to himself.

The birds ceased their warbling; the wild beasts of the forests came in herds and stood about him.

He grew more earnest and the leaves of the trees paused in their fluttering; the winds sunk into silence; the blades of grass stretched their necks; the flowers quit distilling perfume, and the bees were mute.

Then it was that my father formed his hands into a horn and sang into this with such sweetness and power of tone the mountain began to tremble in ecstasy; its sides opened and streams of molten gold and silver, carrying a covering of all manner of precious gems, flowed to his feet, and the jewels formed themselves into piles at his side, and the gold and silver became blocks and arranged themselves into pyramids several feet high. Thereupon the gems filled up the triangle of each step of each pyramid in this order, diamonds first, emeralds next, then pearls, then rubies, then sapphires, and so on until every precious stone was represented by a band, and upon the apex there was fitted in a diamond of such rarity it vied with the sun in luster.

Then a very strange thing happened. The wagons were silently arranged in such manner the pyramids were made to rest upon them so they might be hauled away, which my father then commanded be done.

When this gorgeous display was brought before the king he was so filled with joy he drew my father to his breast, saying he would share his kingdom with him. To which my ancestor would

not consent until the king had promised to banish all lenders of money from the kingdom and to behead whoever should thereafter lend money at usury or whoever should refuse to lend money at a reasonable interest.

And thus it was that that kingdom never more knew troublous times.

XV

Being the eighth and last item of this document containing some very interesting exploits of my father, which I know the reader will enjoy and profit by.

THIRD DOCUMENT—CONTINUED

Item Eighth

AND now I am in duty bound to add a bit of personal history that it may descend with the above historic accounts of the doings and sayings of my ancestry, in order that future generations may not become conceited in the contemplation of their achievements, as they must be of a less wonderful quality each succeeding year, for the great men are rapidly becoming fewer and fewer and the earth at length will not possess a single one whose deeds will be worthy of recording.

So, out of pride for the past and passing grandeur of my ancestors and their descendants, I yield to my sense of responsibility and pen a

sketch or two which should inspire my children and their children with gratitude that they should have been my children and therefore the children of my forefathers.

Be it known then that my great propensity was war. The clash of arms always possessed a fascination I could not withstand. And to that one fact my nation owes its existence, for had I remained at home on a certain day the entire country would have been devastated and the kingdom have gone into other hands. It happened in this wise:

The army of our king had been fighting continuously for many months and it was composed of such great numbers the provender had been exhausted and the warriors were beginning to die of starvation. While it is true a knight may live and fight many days without food and not lose in his execution, yet there is a limit beyond which his power wanes. This limit had been reached some time since and our knights were mere shadows while the forces of our enemies were still well provided with food, were lusty and rampant, and were hewing down great numbers of our chivalry with ease.

I had been detained from the field, for the king could not dispense with my personal service; but when this state of things became known to me I told the king he must excuse my absence, and I departed, much to his displeasure.

When I reached the camp my heart sank within me, for my sorrow was deep upon beholding the wasted forms of such mighty men, still determined of mind but incapacitated of body.

I had brought with me a great auger, which I could make of any length, and, after a few moments spent in calculation, I bored with such persistence the auger seemed to be forced downward by superhuman power. While I was boring with one hand, with the other I formed a great basin about me from softened rock or cement I had brought with me, which hardened as fast as I had it in proper shape, which happened at the time I had my auger at the proper depth.

I thereupon withdrew the auger, and with a single bound cleared the basin just as a stream of liquid, the full size of the hole made by the auger, shot upward and the basin was soon comfortably filled.

The men all being exceedingly thirsty ran with

great speed to the edge of the basin, and began to drink. It did my heart good to note the expression of pleasure which instantly spread over their emaciated faces, and to see them motioning to their comrades with their hands to hurry up, but without removing their lips from the liquid. Their strength increased as their hunger decreased, and when they were satisfied they fell upon the enemy like a whirlwind, slaughtering them in every direction, and what were not killed fled precipitately from the country.

Then it became known what manner of spring it was that was so stimulating, and how it had been brought about.

Well knowing the geological formation of the neighborhood, I was aware that at a certain depth there flowed a stream of hot water; above this was a stratum of oysters and shellfish that had been left there by the drain-off of an inlet from the ocean; above this was a stratum of salt which had kept the oysters fresh and good; above this was a layer of pungent earth; above this the ordinary deposits. So that, first the hot water rushed up through the oyster bed, turned the oysters into soup, which next rushed through

the salt and was thus seasoned agreeably, and next rushed through the pungent earth, and was given just enough spice to whet the appetite.

And thus it was that oyster soup furnished by Nature won the kingdom for our king.

At another time there was a great wolf hunt proposed by the king in my honor. As I knew the road would lead through a country well filled with streams both wide and narrow, I selected a very slender but exceedingly wiry steed for a purpose that will appear hereafter.

The wolf being located and started, the hounds came down the mountain side in full cry. I had alighted to tighten the girth when they got off; but this did not disconcert me in the least, being quite sure of myself and of my horse.

As I had expected, I overtook them at the bank of a very deep and violent stream. Some horses had refused the wading and some riders, thinking it imprudent to venture, had started around by another way. I sounded my horn as I came on at full speed, notwithstanding the cries of warning which rang from their throats. My horse struck the edge of the bank, made a gallant leap, but would have landed in the water about one-third

the way across, but being a man of extraordinary strength, just as he struck the surface of the water I lifted him by the pommel of the saddle, and he made another spring, and just as he struck the water again I lifted him once more, and by a magnificent leap we gained the other side, just as the hounds had brought the wolf at bay within a few hundred yards.

Thinking it unfair to rob my brethren of the pleasure of the death, I waited for them with my lance poised.

The wolf was a monarch of his race and very tough indeed, as was afterward proved. For, when my comrades arrived, he broke through the hounds and made off in long and speedy bounds.

Being at too great distance for my lance, I drew my Winchester, and taking deliberate aim with my horse at full speed I let drive. The wolf was so startled he turned abruptly right about just as the bullet reached his middle, on its course clear through him, and thus sent the bullet back with undiminished velocity, and it struck my good horse between the eyes and went through the entire length of him.

And ever after he was no use in the chase of wild beasts, for the bullet had left the bones of his head in such shape about the hole whenever he was put at a swift gait he became a gigantic organ pipe and frightened the game long before we came upon it.

As it was, however, the wolf was dead, and I had the honor of carrying his scalp home. The manner of his death I almost forgot to mention, for the bullet did not dispatch him.

Having turned about, and the missile's passage having made him very irritable, he made directly for me. Turning my horse to one side just before he reached me I bent low and sent my lance down his throat, catching the head as it came through and bringing up the wolf nicely impaled upon it—he being then stone dead, for the lance had passed through his heart.

XVI

In which I retail a few extraordinary incidents occurring in my travel in a mountainous region, with which the world at large is slightly acquainted, chief among them being a midnight attack made upon me by a drove of lions and a race for life on the back of an ostrich I had hatched in the desert.

THE perusal of the preceding documents had caused me much pleasure and profit, and I feel sure the reader has been delighted with them; though I must confess I was very greatly disappointed in them in one essential, which was, that, while they detailed interesting episodes and neat little batches of history, they gave me rather a mean idea of my ancestry, which I had prized most highly as being men of capability and consequence. Except in a few instances this idea was not borne out by the documents, as I say, much to my chagrin. I had understood the marvels they had performed had been thrilling, blood-curdling, fire-eating, terror-striking, etc., and to find them so exceedingly mild when compared with my

own exploits, which I shall have the pleasure hereafter to relate, was, as I say again, decidedly humiliating. The published accounts of my grandfathers' travels led me to believe that could I get at the real history of the matter there would be food for the gods, and I had found broth for the invalid.

But be that as it may, there was one part of the papers which caused me to turn the thought over once or twice in my mind as to visiting the center of the earth, which I did, and my experiences during that voyage I will give you at another time.

Suffice it then to say that I ended the trip by being volcanoed out, and I will recount to you what occurred immediately after my advent.

I was somewhat disturbed upon ascertaining I had landed in a small clearing in a pine forest at a very high altitude. Had it not been for the heat caused by the eruption of the volcano I have no doubt I should have found myself several yards down in a snow-bank. But so hot had the fire from the crater been the ground was almost too hot to stand upon and I made haste to find more comfortable quarters.

As I was wending my way through the thick forest I heard a great hissing behind me, and to my astonishment observed a river of lava rushing after me at terrific speed. It was of such width I could not run counter and hope to escape. It so happened that in front of me was an inextricable mass of fallen timber, pitch pine almost entirely, and upon this I quickly placed myself. It was so matted together I believe it would have made a convenient raft upon which to take my ride down the incline.

On came the lava, shooting, spurting along, until it lifted my raft on its red-hot bosom and bore it swiftly onward, consuming everything else in its passage.

I soon became aware it was likewise making inroads on my lifeboat, and the dense volume of smoke which began to rise from it gave me an idea.

My mantle had served me well so far, and I now prepared it with greater care, and, therefore, obtained better service from it than I had done in my descent from the sky.

I tied a rope to each corner and it was quickly filled by a mass of pitchy smoke which was ascending all about me. I had got ready none too soon,

for the heat was beginning to scorch me, as the balloon tugged a moment at its cargo and slowly rose. To make sure of a trip of sufficient duration I snatched a number of large pine knots blazing furiously, and held them beneath my chariot.

I must have presented a weird spectacle to the inhabitants, sailing through the air suspended by my parachute and surrounded by a ring of flashing, sputtering, sizzling torchlights. I had quite a comfortable seat where the ropes crossed, and from this position I selected a verdant place to disembark, and succeeded remarkably well, for I landed not only on a nice soft spot, but what was decidedly better, for I was beastly hungry, at a hunter's camp, and it had been recently occupied, for there were standing against a tree several fine Remington rifles and one Winchester, with full magazines, as I learned.

What then bothered me was the whereabouts of the owners of these fine articles; but as night was coming on rapidly, I made myself comfortable for a good sleep.

I cannot tell what hour it was when I was awakened by a frightful roaring near at hand. Placing my arsenal handy I awaited developments

with expectation, knowing if there was one thing above another at which I was an expert it was in the use of firearms.

There was not much delay in the operations, for the lions had undoubtedly been driven from their haunts by the heat from the volcano, by the light from which I soon discovered an immense drove of fine ones on the first ridge between me and the lurid mountain. I counted a hundred, and there were many, very many more — not to say anything about the cubs. And it was to the presence of these young ones that I attributed the fierceness of the old ones.

My experienced eye told me they were advancing directly toward me and I must make ready for them. My knowledge of this game was such I knew my artillery would be of no power whatever against these rapacious animals when once they had scented me, which they quickly did.

Now, what I was to do I did with celerity, and it was to ascend a palm tree and ensconce myself in its branches, taking with me the ropes with which I had constructed my parachute.

As is usually the case the monarch of the herd led the way and was the first to come beneath

the tree. In following my scent he ran his head through the noose I had hung down for the purpose. I thereupon gave him such a sudden and powerful jerk as to break his neck. Another came and I treated him to a hanging. And so it went until two massive fellows got their heads in at the same time, and, knowing it would require additional effort to crack such vertebrae I gave them an extra twist; but it seems they must have sprung into the air at the exact moment, and between the force of my arm and the spring of their limbs, they went to such a height as to pass clear over the tree and, what was worse than all, carried my noose with them.

There still remained about twenty females and their young, and these seemed inclined to camp out there and then, which was not at all to my liking. They must have been almost starved, for they fell upon the bodies of their lords and masters with a horrible snarling and snapping.

All would probably have been well if I had not in a spirit of wantonness shot one of the cubs with the only bullet I had brought up, not thinking I should have occasion to use the firearms at all. This so angered the mothers they held a council

how to get me down. They began to smell around the guns and I was thunderstruck to see one gray-whiskered old female take the Winchester between her paws, point it at me, and begin to fumble for the trigger. I did not lose my presence of mind, and proceeded to put into execution another plan for ridding myself of these obnoxious beasts.

My knowledge of ventriloquism did me splendid service. I threw my voice into a clump of bushes right behind the madam with the gun, which so startled her she lowered the point of the rifle and while she was turning around to learn the exact whereabouts of the intruder she dispatched the piece twelve times in rapid succession, killing a lion at every crack. Then I threw my voice in such manner as to keep her turning and by the time she had got back to the starting point she had disposed of several more.

Then I threw my voice immediately beneath her and gave a terrific yell, which caused her to bound into the air and discharge her gun as she went, which happened to be pointed toward the other rifles, and the ball somehow or other struck in such a manner as to discharge several of them,

one of the balls disposing of her in excellent style, the others killing the few remaining.

I quickly descended from my perch and captured all the cubs, which I tied together and fed with the flesh of the dead lions.

In the morning the hunters returned and their astonishment at the havoc I had wrought among the lions, they could not find an end to their congratulations. I sold them the young lions for a handsome fortune and gave them the hides of the old ones, as they were in the employ of some museums and parks and were out hunting lions for their employers. They had expected to remain a year and this was their first camp. As they only desired twenty lions they could now go back at once with their herd of fifty beautiful cubs.

After they had gone away rejoicing, I laid my course in another direction which finally brought me to the desert.

Wishing to reach an oasis I pressed on, but night overtaking me I lay down on a little mound and went to sleep.

I was awakened at the break of day by the approach of a flock of ostriches coming pellmell toward me. In my hurry to be prepared for them

I disengaged my burning fluid from my pocket, and before I could recover it some of it had been spilled on the mound. I had barely time to grab around the neck the young ostrich that was hatched by the heat produced by my fluid—for it was an ostrich nest on which I had slept.

This chick must have been pretty well saturated by the fluid for his growth was prodigious. As he had been born so suddenly, and therefore was a very newcomer in the neighborhood, he became frightened by the noise made by the mothers and fathers of the brood and made off with me on his back, he going at the top of his speed.

I may be pardoned for remarking it was the prettiest race I had ever witnessed, and I believe

now I did a very contemptible thing, though it did not so appear to me at the time.

The flock was in ripe feather and represented a goodly pile of gold. As I sped along I concerned myself with the problem of their capture, and I was not long in formulating a plan.

Having observed the growing effect of the fluid on the chick I spread some more of it on him. The result was marvelous indeed, for he grew to such a height it made me dizzy to look upon the flying ground. He expanded in every direction, and his back became large enough for me to walk around upon it with comfort.

By dint of exercising some caution I secured a bit in his mouth and was pleased to find he answered quite readily to the rein.

I then turned him about and made for the flock, which stood in open-mouthed wonder—for none of them had ever seen such a chick. He so shook the earth with his tread that it frightened them and they made off at the top of their speed, which appeared to me quite slow, as I had not the slightest difficulty in riding down first one and then another and pulling out the best feathers. This I continued to do until I had a bale of them

many feet square. Then I put them into a frenzy and they scurried across the sand out of sight. I thereupon stopped my horse and alighted with my bale of ostrich feathers. Perhaps it was the love of mother or of father or home, anyhow something, some impulse took possession of my chick and he trotted away leaving me in the burning sand. I grabbed at his tail as he started, but only succeeded in getting fifty or sixty feathers, each about ten feet long and all beautifully curled.

I was somewhat fatigued and lay down on my bale. When I awoke I was surrounded by a herd of Arabs, all with their faces in the sand, muttering exhortations. I spoke in their own tongue, commanding the shiek to arise. When he had done so I asked him the cause of this proceeding. He seemed tongue-tied, with hardly strength enough left to point at the feathers of the young bird.

I asked him what that had to do with it, and after about an hour of urging, with the greatest difficulty he told me, but he had to turn his back to the long feathers, for every time his eyes caught sight of them, he wiggled and twisted, gasped and choked, and would have burrowed his head in

the sand at my feet if I had not made him stand up straight.

He said he had no words to describe his admiration for a man who could find such feathers. After about another hour he managed to face the feathers again with composure, though he accomplished it by the exercise of great care; he turned but an inch at a time, and first took a very little peek out of the tail of his eye, then one a little larger after he had got over his spasms, and so on until at last he was fairly capable of real thought. Then he begged the privilege of hefting one of them. I handed one to him, whereupon he cried aloud to his followers, who jumped to their feet and began to sing as he waved the feather backward and forward. When he had finished he returned it to me most tenderly and fell upon his face; whereupon the others did likewise.

I again spoke to him, commanding him to rise and command his fellows to do the same. Then I communicated to them my desire to dispose of my stock. They could no nothing but look at me and at the long feathers; not a word did they utter for such a time I became provoked and said if they did not want to buy to begone.

They shook their heads, saying there was no man among them rich enough to buy them. I told them to pile up their money in front of me, that I might know how much they had. I was surprised at the quantity; for it was considerable —as much as I had any particular use for. I divided the bale into equal parts, one for each Arab, and asked them if that was a fair exchange for their money, and I never saw such grinning since I learned to swim.

There were fifty women in the party, and to each of those I gave a feather from my feathered horse's tail, and they took turns in embracing me —in fact, they kept it up until I was sore from head to foot, for sometimes there were three or four at it at once, strung along from my neck to my ankles, and I begged them to desist.

The shiek insisted I should select a wife or two from the lot as a slight token of his esteem. This kind offer I politely refused, giving as my reason that I was a man of adventure, and could not very well be burdened with a wife. At this, one of the most beautiful of the girls fell to weeping and tearing her hair. I had great difficulty in reducing her grief sufficiently for her to part with

me; but at last, by filling a water-bag with gold, and presenting it to her, together with the remainder of the long feathers, I got away.

The Arabs made a pretty sight as they moved across the desert, their feathers nicely wrapped in tissue paper and waving above their heads.

XVII

In which I give an account of the receipt of a curious message concerning a most beautiful princess and a labyrinth, and start out in search of both. I also give some details on transactions on the way, which I trust will be diverting.

ON reaching an oasis, I was very thirsty, and sought the well, to which I descended, and had about satisfied myself, when I observed a peculiar stone at the bottom, which I procured and was examining when I discovered it was hollow. Now, I knew not whether to break it open or seek some other means of ascertaining whether or not it contained anything of value. I pondered a while on the problem, when I found the stone was quite soft and easily crumbled in my hand. I was about to throw it away when I saw what appeared to be a piece of parchment rolled into a very small parcel. It proved to be what I had supposed it was, and upon it was written the following.:

To him who shall find this message I send greeting, and say unto him that I am of great beauty and wealth, and that I have sent this message forth in this manner in order that I may know that he who shall bring it to me is a man of strength of purpose and goodness of heart.

For I am lone and lonely, having placed myself in the center of a troublesome labyrinth, which will test the powers of the most acute.

But unto him who shall come to me and bring this message, I will give my love and my wealth and my devotion.

He will know the labyrinth, for it is surrounded by pure white trees in triple rows, and it is not many leagues from this place.

TETE TETE.

Now, of all the things I most desired to encounter, a labyrinth was the thing. And as I considered about it, it occurred to me that of the world I had seen enough; in fact, about all there was to be seen, and a great longing for quiet and rest and the companionship of a loving wife came over me, and decided the matter.

But in which direction I was to look for the prize, I at once knew not, for as far as I could see was barren waste and sand.

I climbed to the top of a great palm tree, and gazed about me, but was no wiser.

So I lay down to rest, fell asleep, and dreamed of the princess and the troublesome labyrinth until the following day was well along.

XVIII

I continue my search for the labyrinth and come upon a hermit who relates a rather interesting story, which decides my course of action.

I HAD lived a bachelor's life for the reason I have heretofore given, and had been exceedingly contented. But now nothing but an overpowering desire for connubial felicity found place in my thoughts, and that felicity persisted in centering around the writer of the message I have set forth at length.

I had been made much of by many admirable women, owing to my many adventures and traveling experiences, as, somehow or other, women like brave men, and a man who has traveled a great deal they think must of necessity be brave. I do not wish to be understood as saying they made love to me; far from it; they were too polished: but I doubt not, had I been so inclined, my suit would have received favor. But now my soul was consuming for the presence of this unknown

The days of magic were over, else I would have sought its aid. And yet I was in a land of mystery. Might I not find some one whose vision might locate this fair one?

I searched among the tribes of nomads diligently, without any degree of success. Many there were told me much I knew, and more of which I have not ascertained the truth or lack of it.

I spent several months in these fruitless efforts, and at last was brought to a realization I had never failed when I relied on my own ingenuity, and I should not fail in this case.

A short time spent in analyzing the situation, when I had reached this conclusion, gave me a plan of operations: I must build another airship and sail over the country until I found her, which should be a matter of brief duration, as, if I could rise high enough, I could take in a vast space, and must discover the white trees from a great distance, and those once discovered, nothing could prevent reaching the goal.

I therefore journeyed to the mountains, as I could not launch my craft from a low altitude.

About half-way up the mountain side I came upon a cabin occupied by a hermit. Now it so

happened that one side of his cabin was composed of a single board—just precisely what I desired. I made the remark I would be glad to purchase it of him. At which suggestion he laughed immoderately. What had he to do with gold? He neither bought nor sold. He did not even so much as exchange one thing for another—not even in the matter of clothing. I was convinced I could not find another board so well suited to my needs, and I was not to be rebuffed.

I asked him upon what terms he would part with it. No terms whatever. Did it not form one side of his cabin, and was it not exactly what he needed in the place in which it was? I admitted the point. And he went so far as to assert it came with very ill grace for me to suggest its removal. Not saying as much as he would like, or as the circumstances might permit, he would, however, state that I was laboring from one of the ailments which were ultimately to ruin the human race, to-wit, selfishness; that it had been the one blot on his fair life, and he had come hither to atone.

I showed my interest, and he narrated the following story:

The Hermit's Story

Five years ago come spring I was a husky man, indeed. Of such power was I there were few men in the realm having sufficient temerity to cross weapons of whatever nature with me.

There was a very beautiful woman in the country, to whose hand I laid siege. I may as well state in the outset, I had little hope, but I determined if I should not succeed no other one would. Her father was very austere, and gave her few liberties, though she was permitted greater license than any other young lady. Her father loved her dearly, and it was his wish she should marry well. It is my opinion she inherited a desire in a similar direction, for no one of her suitors received the slightest encouragement.

At the time I came upon the scene of her life there was a chivalrous young man who considered all else but her love of trifling importance. I quickly became of the same opinion. Each observed closely all the other did, and it so happened I one day met him in the woods at the hunt.

When we came in at the death I rode to a conspicuous place and challenged to mortal combat

any man who held claim as a suitor of the princess—for she was a princess, and would, if she chose, receive the throne on her father's demise. The young man rode forth, spear in hand, and the entire company proceeded to an opening of size near by, which we circled around for some time, when he suddenly wheeled his horse and came at me with his lance atilt. I was on my guard, and by a simple twist broke his lance. I rode away, and a friend handed him a broadsword; mine was at my side.

I could have killed him before, but preferred to prolong the matter for the edification of the assembly. He was frothing with rage, and his eyes blazed dangerously as he came at a swinging gallop, his sword in a very awkward position—so it seemed to me, but proved otherwise, and I barely escaped without injury. My horse was of excellent metal, and was snorting gleefully. I whirled about and made at my antagonist pell-mell.

I now observed that he was left-handed, which accounted for my supposition of awkwardness on his part. He therefore tried to ride on the opposite from the usual side, which I tried to prevent,

but was not quick enough, and lost the top of my helmet, being thankful to come off so well.

My veins were now well filled, and I set my teeth hard as I careered toward him in an attempt

to quarter his course, and his sword struck my horse's flanks as I swung my sword with a blow that would have split in twain an ordinary man. He caught it with such dexterity as to break my sword in halves.

I dismounted, drew my light Damascus blade, and stood awaiting him. He was no laggard, and was soon facing me, as the guests formed a circle. It was as pretty a battle as any one might wish to see. I never saw a man with such a pair of lungs. He never seemed in the least to suffer for breath, though I kept him quite busy, and I

may say he kept me well occupied. Neither of us could gain a point.

Suddenly there broke into the ring a page from the court, who cried aloud:

"Gentlemen: The princess sends greeting, and says she has learned you are indulging in this display of valor because of her. Therefore she sends word, saying as follows: She is curious in no way as to what the outcome may be, as she is not in the least interested in either of you. And she says furthermore if but one of you survive he shall be banished from the realm during the remainder of his natural life for deigning to go to such extremities without her permission. And that if this message shall have the effect of stopping the combat it will show your true merit. And she wished me to close my remarks with the following manifesto: That whoever shall further witness your efforts upon this or any other field shall be punished by banishment and confiscation of his entire property and title."

Thereupon he left us. Neither of us speaking nor moving for a time, the entire body of spectators disappeared, and we were alone. Then he spake:

"Sir Swelltoad, you have heard the message. The combat was stopped without the consent of either, and therefore I must give warning and say that I seek banishment. What is your will?"

"Defend yourself," was my reply.

It was a short matter, for he was now overzealous, and I was soon on my horse and am here where you have found me.

I might add that two years ago the princess became so disgusted with all mankind she had a wonderful labyrinth erected for her, repaired into its secret chamber, and will see no one who will not solve its mystery; but that no one who has ever fought for her may strive to enter under penalty of death in a most ignominious manner.

This ended the hermit's story. It is needless to say my interest was aroused, and with all the composure and carelessness I could command I endeavored to adroitly ascertain the whereabouts of the labyrinth. I therefore said:

"And has no one found the secret chamber?"

"No one has found it, and no one has returned, for it is so constructed that, having once entered

the labyrinth, there is no way of return, and he who enters wanders until starvation ends him."

"Is this labyrinth at a great distance?"

"It is the other side of the mountains," he returned.

"I am exceedingly curious to see what that secret chamber is like," I remarked, carelessly.

"Let me dissuade you," said he, "from the undertaking, for it will be fruitless."

"Why so?" I asked.

"For it is a most wonderful labyrinth. It is full of every imaginable thing in the way of pitfalls and wild-eyed beasts, and it is impossible for any one to succeed. I say this, because a most formidable knight who had faced death in every conceivable form went on the quest a month ago and has not returned. Each day there is a herald sent forth to cry out whether any one has succeeded. A week ago—the last news I had—no one had been crowned. And no one ever will be."

XVIIII

I enter the labyrinth and listen to the rules governing my progress therein. I meet a terrible lion which I overcome quite readily, as I likewise do other difficulties I encounter, especially a huge serpent which I gorge with an indigestible meal.

NOTWITHSTANDING what the hermit had said, I proceeded on my journey across the mountains. When I reached the highest peak I saw a square of white trees. This was of great extent, inclosing several hundred square miles of land, which was full of hills and rivers. I noticed the trees within the square were so closely set the ground was not visible from my position, and if I had passed over it in my airship I should have been none the wiser.

I observed, however, what I supposed to be an entrance on each of the four sides, and made my way to the nearest one.

As I was about to enter, I was accosted by a voice (the owner of which I could not discover, though I diligently sought to do so) which said:

"Enterest thou here as a suitor to the hand of the princess?"

"Thou dost speak with great truthfulness," I made answer.

"Then harken thou to the following rules, each one of which must receive strict attention at your hands under penalty of death.

"First: If thou hast fought because of the princess, turn back at once.

"Second: Thou shalt seek to gain the secret chamber by no unfair means.

"Third: Thou shalt not speak aloud, unless bidden so to do by the princess herself.

"Fourth: Thou shalt not carry any weapon.

"Fifth: Thou shalt not kill anything.

"Sixth: Thou shalt not pluck any leaf, blossom, twig, or limb that is alive.

"Seventh: Thou shalt not leave marks by the aid of which to retrace thy steps.

"Eighth: Thou shalt not depart from the paths on any pretense whatsoever.

"Dost thou agree to these rules?"

"I do," was my reply.

"Know ye the breaking of any of them will result in thy instant death?"

"I know."

"Proceed."

I deposited all my weapons, of which I had a goodly number, on a pile of several hundred others, and stood a moment in contemplation.

Before me were three avenues, so closely lined with trees with such dense foliage the sky was nowhere visible and a deep twilight pervaded beneath them. There was one straight ahead, one to the right, one to the left, each leading at right angle to its neighbor. All were alike, with this difference: that two of them somehow gave me the feeling they had been well traveled, while the third, which was on the right, had been little used.

I chose the one on the right and started forward.

How far I had traveled I do not know, for I had gone at a brisk pace and the way had been so winding and twisting and turning, when there came to my ears the low growl of an eager lion. I hailed the sound with joy, for I was satisfied the road leading to victory would be a very dangerous one and most difficult to travel, and I had gone such a distance without an obstacle I was beginning to be doubtful. The muffled roar of the beast reassured me and I pressed onward.

I came to where the road branched in three directions. I was thankful I possessed a keen ear, for by its aid was I enabled to take the one which led to the lion, and I soon saw him stretched on the ground gnawing a bone which was probably all that was left of some suitor.

The lion raised his head and looked at me long and steadily, as if to say: "What! Another?"

Now, I had heard if a lion meets an unflinching gaze he will take himself off without attempting to injure the gazer. I walked within a few yards and set my glance on his eyes. He seemed slightly astonished after a few minutes, and I persisted. Then his tail began to sway from side to side with great force. His next movement was to fix himself for a spring. Perhaps he had had so much of that gazing business he was used to it; in any event, it was not working like a charm, and I resorted to other tactics.

I must pass that lion, and the path was so narrow his body completely filled it.

I stood my ground and saw his muscles set as his body grew closer and closer to the ground. Then his fibers began to tremble, and I knew the time was near at hand.

With a terrific roar that almost unsettled me, he sprang into the air. I stooped low and ran with great speed, passing under him as he flew to the spot I had just quitted. Nor did I slacken my speed until I reached a river flowing with surging force down a channel fifteen or twenty feet across. Hearing the lion coming, I cast about me, knowing if I could cross the stream the lion would not, for lions hate water, like all the cat tribe.

I repeated the rules so many times as I came along I knew them by heart. "Thou shalt not pluck any leaf, blossom, twig, or limb that is alive," one of them said.

Now, I saw a dead vine which hung from the top of one of the trees, and which was broken off a few feet from the ground. This last I did not discover until I had made an examination, for the end was hidden in the foliage. The lion was coming with more speed as my tracks were so fresh. I seized the end of the vine firmly in my hands and swung backward and forward until by an extra effort I reached the other side just as the lion reached the spot I had swung from. By carefully gauging the distance I sent the vine

back to its hiding place in order that I should leave nothing by which I might retrace my steps, to comply with another of the rules.

I thought I heard an exclamation near by, but could not discern from whence it came. As night was approaching I hastened on in the hope I might find some safe place for the night.

I had proceeded some space by devious paths, keeping to the right when there was a fork in the roads, until I stood at the top of an incline, down which the narrow way went on. About half way to the bottom I saw a huge serpent lying with his great mouth directly toward me, the balance of him meandering among the trees and shrubs on both sides, leaving no possibility of my passing him.

Again I was delighted at this new evidence I was on the right road, and devised a plan by which I circumvented the snake. Since my boyhood experience I had taken great joy in outwitting reptiles, and had been always successful; therefore I had no fear in this case.

As my enemy appeared half asleep, having probably been gorged by other suitors, but not in the manner following, I took that much advantage of him.

The top of the hill was well supplied with large round boulders. I loosened one of them, and it was a prodigious one, and put it in the center of the path. I went for another and another until I had quite a stock of stone cannon balls.

Then I sighted one of them most carefully and sent it spinning down the hill. It went true as a die and entered the serpent's mouth, holding it firmly, for a moment, to the ground. Then I opened my fusillade in dead earnest, and such a dinner no scaly fiend ever had, for by the time I got to the coffee and cigars he was so full the last few hit against those lodged in his mouth and rolled on harmlessly. His condition must have been indeed awkward, for him, for he now lay as straight as a kite-string in a gale, and he could but emit a hoarse hiss as I passed him by, wishing him success in recovering from his indigestion.

I was now quite positive I heard a suppressed laugh, but could discover no one by peering into the foliage, as I was not permitted to leave the path on any pretense.

I continued my journey and had barely reached the bottom of the incline when there came shooting after me such a torrent of boulders I had to

run for it to save my life, and I am quite sure I should have been a goner had the path continued straight; but, to my great joy, I came upon an abrupt turn and lost no time in getting around the happy corner.

The poor snake's stomach must have troubled him. I fear the effort required to relieve his overcharged condition quite put him out of the running, for I saw and heard no more of him.

I came next to a chasm, several yards in width and exceedingly deep. There was nothing but shrubbery on either side, and it was impossible to scale this or the other side. Neither was it possible for me to jump it, and I am no mean jumper.

There was nothing that could be of any possible assistance but a bare pole. I tried to push this across, but could not manage it. I endeavored to let it fall over, but in length it was a trifle short of the width of the chasm, and I almost lost it.

I had about concluded to camp there for the night, though I shivered when I thought of the serpent and that he might give chase when he had recuperated somewhat. The more I thought of that venom-spitter, the more reluctant was I to remain on that side of the gorge during the

whole night, unarmed as I was and unprotected in any way from a thing that could follow me anywhere I might go.

With joy I finally saw a crack in the edge of the rock. I quickly grasped the pole and rammed one end into that, wedging it tightly. This left it in a perpendicular position, and I lost no time mounting to its top. When there it seemed such a short distance across I felt inclined to chance a jump for it; but my sense came to my rescue, and getting a secure grip on the very end of the pole with both hands, I started it to falling across. When I was well under way through the air, I gave my body a twist and lengthened the pole in that manner by my whole length, which brought me sprawling but happily on the other side, the pole tumbling into the stream. Thus I had again left nothing by which I could retrace my steps.

I was mightily well pleased to find a snug house before I had gone half a mile, for I was bent on putting as much space between that snake and myself, for that chasm did not seem such a terrible thing for him to cross when I remembered his horrible length—it would have been no trick at all for him to have spanned it with but a kink or two.

So, as I say, I was delighted at the sight of the habitation.

On the steps sat an old woman, and I paid her a pleasant time of day. She said not a word, but arose and entered the house.

My nose told me there was that within which would quiet the pangs of hunger now giving me much discomfort, and I followed her.

There was a table with one chair at it and she was busy at the fire. I stood by the chair and she looked at me with every kind of astonishment. This confused me so that I sat in the chair and she went on with her cooking.

I could not resist the tempting meal that lay before me, and as she made no protest when I had taken one mouthful, and I eyed her closely as I took it, I took another, and another, until I had finally eaten a hearty meal, and felt nice and smooth and very much pleased with everything.

I arose and gazed about me. She went to a ladder which led to an upper floor, looked up it and then passed out the door. When she returned, which she did after a few minutes, I was in the very same place.

She went to the ladder again, looked up it, and

again passed out. When she again returned I was still there. Again she went to the ladder, looked up it a third time, and a third time passed out.

What she meant now began to percolate through my brain. You see, I had eaten so heartily and felt so comfortable my brain had got to sleep before my body had, and I had really not been thinking. But now I went to the ladder and looked up, and was so doing when she again returned to the door, glanced at me and went away.

Then I climbed the ladder and I was almost asleep all over before I could get to it; for there before my very eyes was the softest bed conjurable. So, I do not remember anything more, whether I just tumbled onto the cozy thing and was in slumber before I struck it, or whether I went through the usual routine.

Anyhow, my repose was pleasant, for it was filled with dreams of the beautiful princess I was soon to see, as it seemed to me the difficulties I had already overcome were greater than any that could possibly present themselves. Alas, how mistaken was I!

XX

I continue my travel, splendidly refreshed by a good night's sleep. I explain how I escaped from the angry bears and from a host of hungry alligators; how I charmed the deadly vipers, and how I ascended a glistening granite precipice.

WHEN I awoke on the following morning, I descended and found a magnificent repast awaiting me. So bounteous was the supply I was astonished. As I could not tell how long it might be before I would be again so fortunate, I ate heartily, and after thanking the old lady sincerely, as she had refused, silently but positively, any remuneration, I went my way.

I came to a round, clear opening, covered with grass, a meadow, out of which were paths innumerable.

I lay down in such a position I could inspect each path in turn and subjected each to a rigid inspection from that distance. Some were narrow, some wide, some gravel, some sod, some lined with flowers, some rocky, some dry, some wet and

marshy, some straight, some crooked, some overhung with foliage, and some on which the sun shone brilliantly.

On one side the hills came sharp down to the meadow. At one place there appeared to be a small cave out of which a stream of water was flowing. As I was very thirsty I thought there must be a spring in the cavern and thither I bent my steps. The stream was of clear, sparkling water, of which I partook freely. There was such a cool air coming from the cave, and as it was becoming quite warm in the sun, I went in to sit down during the heat of the day.

I had sat but a moment when my old spirit of investigation came on me and I sought to learn how far into the earth the cave extended, knowing well I could easily retrace my steps without using any unfair means.

I went in a great distance, and came to a branch. Along one course I thought I could detect a point of light indicating another end to the cave; the other passage was dark.

After a time I discovered that the first was filled with animals. It now occurred to me that in all probability this was the true way to the

secret chamber, and the passage occupied by the beasts was the one I should take. So, on I went, quite sure and confident. The snarling and growling of the animals increased in volume as I approached, and when I reached a swell in the tunnel I found this cavern contained a number of large bears, which raised their heads and sniffed the air, evidently scenting me.

How was I to pass them, as pass them I must, was the question I had to answer.

They were ferocious in the extreme, for there were old and young ones, and they were now engaged in quarreling over a very scanty meal which they would undoubtedly take great pleasure in making larger and more fitting to their number and size.

One old surly she-bear had concluded to look up the intruder, and approached me, growling in a very menacing manner. I could not see her all the time, for she would pass to one side or the other of the light, and be in darkness most. This increased my difficulty.

I must not kill her, or any of them; but I must pass them, and would pass them without killing them, for I had matured a plan for so doing.

I dare not use my voice, and it is doubtful I could have frightened them by the use of it. Being very swift of foot I dodged the mother bear who was searching for me, and came up to the snarling, snapping cubs. They suddenly scented me and backed away a short distance from their meal, prior to bounding on me.

This was what I had calculated they would do, and I grasped the opportunity by rushing in and picking up their repast, which consisted of a young deer, though I had feared I would find it to be another suitor.

I backed away and they followed. As they increased their speed I increased mine. I was leading them around the cavern away from the tunnel with the light at the end. When we reached the farther end and started toward the light, I began to run, and just as I got to the entrance to the lighted passage I dropped the deer and fled, while they pounced on their meal with renewed vengeance, the old she-bear alone following. I soon left her behind and reached the sunlight, much to my relief, which, however, was but temporary, for two enormous bears were coming up the path. My flight had been so

precipitate, and I was now going at such speed it was impossible for me to stop my progress.

They arose on their hind legs to embrace me, and, being an athlete, I took a flying leap, striking one of them in the stomach with such force as to send it sprawling with a monstrous grunt of disapproval, and I bounded over its prostrate form and disappeared before either could recover from the astonishment that had so suddenly overwhelmed them.

I was so full of desire to complete my undertaking I did not ease up on my pace for many miles, and only did so then because I had arrived at the brink of a terrible precipice, at which the path ended. I stood on the verge and looked into a deep lake one hundred and fifty feet below me. The water was so clear I could see large bodies moving in all directions in it, which turned out to be great crocodiles.

It would have been an easy matter to have taken a header into the water, for I was an expert diver, but how was I to avoid the saurians? That was the problem I set myself to solve, which I did in the following comfortable manner.

The lake was fully half a mile long, and at the

foot of the precipice but a few yards wide. Now, I had prodigious strength of arm, and I took advantage of those water cattle by selecting a lot of good-sized stones, which I threw with all my might; and so great was the space traveled by them before they struck, the crocodiles could not swim the space in several minutes.

As the stones began to strike the water they were all excitement, and at once proceeded to learn the cause of the disturbance, and away they went.

When they had all reached the spot, I sprang head first into the water, and rising easily to the surface swam to shore before they had fairly got started back to investigate the new commotion.

While standing on the summit of the rock I had decided which of several paths I should take, the one I had selected being through a grassy bit of country.

Over this I went upwards of a mile, when I found my further progress impeded by a swarm of deadly vipers, which so filled the way I could scarcely see the ground. They were having a very quiet time, but on becoming aware of my presence they set up such a rattling I thought

for a moment there was a shower of pebbles falling on the rocks.

Now, being possessed of a very strong pair of boots, which came high on my legs, I could readily have stamped them all to death, but I dare not harm them, and I knew that to attempt to pass them and leave them unhurt was simple suicide. I therefore hit upon the following plan to evade them and continue my way:

As I was passing through the water on my dive I had observed a beautiful colored shell on the bottom of the lake, and had brought it with me. I now looked it over. As the snakes had not yet determined to attack me because I had not disturbed them, I stepped to a large boulder of sandstone near by, and by dint of using it as a grinder I succeeded in wearing away the end of the shell. Then, by the aid of a sharp stone, I bored eight holes in it at proper intervals. When I had done, I put the instrument to my lips and began to play on it, for, as I have stated before, I believe, I am an accomplished musician.

I executed a low, plaintive air at first, which appeared to please my audience and they uncoiled themselves and assumed a less warlike attitude.

Then I shortened the time and had them dancing for joy. When I had them thus entranced I cautiously made my way through their numbers and changed to a very slow and heavy measure, and in a very short time had put them all soundly to sleep, in which condition I left them and went onward.

I was now approaching another mountain and was suddenly stopped by an abrupt end to the path. There was no mistaking the fact, the path turned neither to the right nor to the left, but that the way to the secret chamber lay up a perpendicular wall a hundred feet high and as smooth as glass.

This exceeded my wildest imaginings of difficulties. I was completely nonplussed, and I reclined on the ground in absolute discouragement. It was my first real discouragement. Never

before had I met an insurmountable barrier between me and my desires; but here seemed to be one, without any shadow of doubt.

And I was decidedly fatigued, for I had come a great distance. I was also positively aware my hearty breakfast had served its usefulness, and my power would soon wane by virtue of hunger.

I saw all my castles in the air tumbling down most miserably. The dear princess was fading in the distance. I was so put out, so tired, and so hungry I must have fallen asleep, for I became conscious suddenly by feeling something cold running over my face. "Snakes" of all sizes were in my mind; but it was but a harmless lizard, though of good size, some two feet long. There were hundreds of them, and how I envied them as they scampered carelessly and, I thought, mockingly over the face of my enemy, the granite precipice. They were hunting a species of large insect which sometimes paused to rest on the rock, at such times a herd endeavoring to effect a capture.

In one of these attacks the insect was wounded, but escaped their tongues, fell at my feet, and died.

My spirits arose, and I quickly secured it, placing

it in my pocket for use at the proper time. I found in the grass a lot of dead, pliable roots. Having secured the requisite number of these, I picked up some dried switches and spliced the roots until I had a pole of the desired length.

This brought me to the interesting part of my plan, which I had formed from watching the lizards, bless them!

I then tied the bug to the end of the pole, and by handling my fishing outfit adroitly I enticed a lizard close enough to capture him, and then another, and still another, and yet another, until I had about twenty of them. I was astonished at their strength. As I captured them I tied the tail of one to the neck of another, so I was compelled to hold but one, the last one, and that was enough, as they got stronger each time I added one. At last my team was harnessed, and it was a goodly tandem, the wheel horse being a magnificent specimen, with a tail of sufficient size for me to grasp it firmly in my right hand.

I then held the bug in front of my leader in such a position they could all see it, and after it they all went. I started the insect up the surface of the rock, and they went at such speed

they gave my arm quite a wrench when they lifted me off my feet and started up the rock with me dangling. Maybe I did not have the grip of my life on that tail! It is a wonder I did not squeeze it square off.

When I was hanging midway between the top and bottom I really thought it was all over and that they had come to the conclusion the bug wasn't worth it anyway. I put all my ingenuity into that insect, and made him appear so entrancing that away they went after him, I always keeping him just out of the reach of the leader. But this time I had to give each one a sniff of it, and as I dipped it along in this way I thought my arm would come out, for they literally humped themselves to get it.

As I neared the top I had, of course, to come at it on an angle, as I could not lead them directly over the edge, and so I did, and when they had dragged me over the edge onto some nice green grass, I tell you, I heaved a monstrous sigh of victory.

But I was not out of my trouble. They had the bug, of course, and I had to let go my hold, which was no easy matter. I at length succeeded,

and at once unharnessed my good team and let them free, each one going away with my blessing.

But I was too tired to go another step, and was about to lie down on the sweet grass and go to sleep when I saw a house quite similar to the one I had met the night before, and on the steps of which I saw another old lady, in all respects like the one who had cooked my meals at the other house.

She nodded her head in such a way as to turn me round and cause me to look off across the country, and I there saw a most exquisite palace of white marble with a dome of amethyst just then glittering in the rays of the setting sun.

I gazed at her inquiringly, and she nodded her head in a fashion which assured me she understood my glance.

But the scent of food within drove all else out of my mind, and I made bold to enter. I enjoyed a rich repast in every way equal to the one of the night before, after which I ascended the ladder and was soon asleep.

XXI

My vigor renewed by another night of refreshing repose, I proceed on my journey, overcoming, in turn, a sharp decline covered with round, smooth, loose stones, a swarm of hornets, a slippery, zigzag descent, a great lake filled with countless leeches, and a wedge in the forest.

WHAT bothered me for a moment in the morning was the fact the path I must take led me directly away from that dear palace; but this I did not permit to disturb me any great length, for the presence of the palace told me distinctly I was on the right track, and I would vary from it on no account.

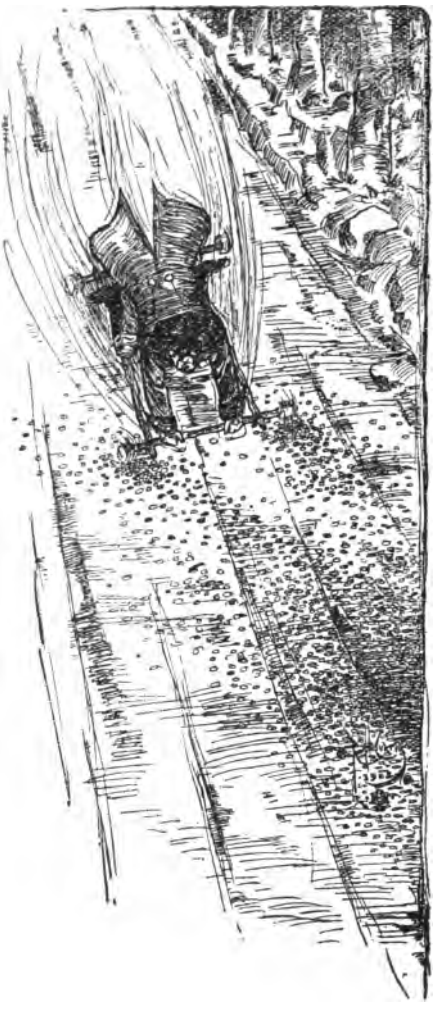
I gazed long and earnestly on the beautiful object, and when I at last turned around and started forward I heard an exclamation of joy, and on looking at the old woman standing in the door I saw a smile on her face, and I considered that she had given voice to some thought in her peculiar mind, for I saw nothing taking place that could cause any sentiment.

So on I journeyed and came to a sharp decline which was so covered with perfectly round, loose pebbles it would have been a very hazardous undertaking to have attempted to descend. In fact, I tried it, and quickly found myself sprawling and tumbling, bringing up against the edge of the path much bruised and shaken.

I scrambled to the top, as I had come but a few busy feet, and sat down, as was my invariable custom when I wished to think deeply.

Glancing about I saw four sticks of dead timber of about equal length. Those I secured, for they were neither "leaves, blossoms, nor twigs." In searching among the stones I found four which had holes in them, and they happened to be of sufficient depth and size to admit the ends of my sticks. When I had fixed the sticks firmly by pounding them in, I secured some dead roots and bound the other sticks on the first two in such manner as to make a very serviceable wagon, as I had tied them together so as to permit the first two to turn readily.

I then placed my hands on the front axle, so as to regulate the speed of my descent, and my knees on the cross sticks. In this manner I went



down quite handily. Though I was somewhat shaken, I reached the bottom in very good shape, as the pebbles and stones rolled under my wheels in such a way as to make a very soft ball-bearing, and the descent was quite easy, albeit rapid.

Here another difficulty met me, and I should certainly have been stung to death but for my presence of mind, as the way was literally filled with hornets, sizzing here and there with terrible swiftness.

I quickly tore loose one of my axles, which was hollow. The pathway here was thick with dust. By putting the end of my axle in the dust and blowing through it with all my lung power, I stirred up such a cloud the hornets lost their way and failed to find me. By walking slowly along, covered by the cloud of dust and completely enveloped in it, I came safely through the hornets' territory, suffering only from one or two of their stings.

I next came to where the path went down another slope, so steep the road went down it in a zigzag course, each turn being a very sharp angle. In such manner are the roads constructed up the sides of steep mountains. If the roadbed

had not been of a peculiar composition I should easily have gone forward; but it was of soapstone, and the mountain side being full of springs the stone was thus kept moist, and was therefore very slippery. One of the rules said distinctly I should not depart from the path on any pretense whatever, and I knew very well if I started down and slipped, which I was quite likely to do, I should certainly shoot over the edge of the path, and thus break the rule if I did not break my neck, and both would probably result.

Even had I my wagon I could not turn the abrupt corners. So, what was I to do? If I had not followed my usual method of sitting down to think it out, I should in all probability be at the top of that slope yet, still thinking.

As it was, though I did sit down I remained in a sitting posture no great length of time, for immediately beneath me was an enormous bumblebees' nest, and a number of the most pugnacious resented at the point of their swords my trespass on their territory, and with great alacrity I coincided in their views.

Thus it was I was enabled to make the descent with no discomfort whatever; for, having lighted

my pipe, I blew a cloud of smoke into the nest, so the inhabitants were only too glad to fly away and let me do my worst, which consisted in extracting enough of their store of honey with which to coat the soles of my boots enough times to keep them in such condition they would adhere tightly to the soapstone until I had reached the plain below, which I did, as I have said, very neatly.

At the bottom of this incline I had another view of the gorgeous palace; but the path again led away from it, and I followed it with grim determination, feeling, however, just a little doubtful about the justice of further perplexities in my path. Yet, she it was who had planned them, and I was finally but too glad to do her sweet bidding, realizing it was but a question of time, as I feared no further impediments. And I could but scold myself for taking the path I did, for there was another leading directly toward my goal. Though I felt that in all my travels I had never been beset in such a brief compass of time with so many obstacles, and would gladly have seen the end of them, I could not satisfy myself the other path was the proper one, and my judgment again proved unerring.

And the next barrier interposed, which temporarily stopped my further progress, came near causing me to give up the whole affair, and I should probably have done so had not I imagined I heard a scornful laugh when my discomfiture was most apparent on my countenance—I say, had it not been for the stinging of that laugh, I might have lain down right there and died from wounded pride.

And though that titulation was but an hallucination of my brain, it sent my forces back into the ranks and I went at the obstacle in such a business-like way it was soon a thing of the past.

The obstacle was a lake about two miles wide. Now, I could easily have swam it, but it was well tenanted with a large variety of leech, as I was made aware when I recklessly launched myself upon its surface, for they attacked me in such numbers their weight would have drowned me then and there had I reached a sufficient distance from the shore to have been in water over my head. As it was I was so thoroughly tired out in carrying myself thus burdened with them back to shore I sat down with only enough power remaining to remove them and cast them on the ground.

It was at that moment I thought I heard the scornful laugh, and I was then gazing at those leeches anything but pleasantly, for they had all but spent my entire strength in the brief space during which they had been fastened on me.

My eye caught sight of a small feather on the sand, and a broad smile must have appeared on my face, for I was instantly filled with joy.

I bit off the small tip of the quill and likewise enough of the other end to permit me to blow out the pith. I was forbidden to kill anything, and I did not propose to kill these leeches unless it became necessary; but I admit I bore them no good will, and under other circumstances I could have enjoyed tearing them to pieces one by one.

I inserted the quill in each in turn and blew up a hundred or more of them until they looked like great balls. I then put the mouth of one to the side of another, to which it adhered tenaciously, until I had a square of them several feet across. I then made another square of the same size, and laid that on top of the first, and then another, and laid that on top of the second, and still another on top of the third.

I pushed my raft into the water and got upon it.

As there was quite a breeze blowing, I spread my mantle and sailed slowly but positively to the point on the other side at which the path continued its course.

As I walked along I noticed the trees on either side were increasing in height and becoming thicker and closer to the path as I went on, with the result I at length found myself in what might well be termed a pocket, with trees towering two hundred feet in the air, and so close together it was impossible for me to squeeze between the next two, the last two having flattened me all nature would stand.

Through a narrow slit I saw the path continued, but of such narrowness was this aperture I could barely put my arm through it.

I sat down to think it out; or, rather, in lieu of sitting I leaned against a tree, for they were too closely set to permit me to sit.

I could think of no way out of the dilemma, and was so tired withal I fell sound asleep. When I opened my eyes it was as black as a ton of coal. I went again to sleep, as I received no new thought, and was awakened by a peal of thunder. The air was literally full of lightning sparks, darting

about in every conceivable direction, crossing each other at every possible angle, and from the distance came the roar of a frightful wind. I was about to be overtaken by a cyclone, and I could do nothing but wait. I dared not depart from the path, and, in fact, the path was as safe as any place. I knew very well if the storm center should pass in my vicinity I should be killed by the falling timber; yet I was determined not to give up my purpose—I would rather die complying with the rules.

The storm seemed an age in coming, and at last I saw the whirling center would pass far enough away not to carry me up in its funnel; this I could tell by the noise among the trees. It was terrible; what majestic wrenchings were going on! How the great forest giants struggled, only to be torn up by the roots or twisted into splinters and hurled furiously away! And the rushing of the wind—what horrors it contained—a demon freed and recking his vengeance for having been imprisoned—how he shrieked in his mad delirium! How he howled and hissed in his tantrum! It nearly froze the marrow in my bones.

A strong current of air was rushing by me, and growing steadily stronger each second. I should be picked up by it before the end and whirled—the Lord knew where—but I prayed I should not be taken out of the path.

I felt the first real gush of the tearing wind. It was entering my pocket. What would it do? I did not have long to wait for my answer, brought by the wind itself. The pressure it exerted soon became almost unbearable, and while the tension was at its height a vivid flash of lightning showed me that the trees in my path were being forced apart, and even now the slit was wide enough for me to spring through. No sooner thought than done. And all I had to do was to loosen my grip on the tree to which I had been holding and be blown through by the rushing wind. The blast that took me through was the last throe in that particular vicinity.

I was lying on the ground, much jarred and bruised, but decidedly happy, for the path lay before, waiting for my feet. So I gave thanks to the storm and proceeded to finish my nap, for it was now dark, and I was completely fagged.

When the dawn made things again clear I could

not refrain from inspecting the place through which I had come.

Now, there are times in every man's life when he feels he has been a sad mistake; that when his anatomical machine was assembled it was not put together right; that there is a screw loose somewhere in his being. And so it then seemed to me as I gazed at the slot between the trees.

There was but one excuse for me, my brains must have been lost in the last episode, or I had lost the combination to my thought-maker. There before my eyes stood the monument of my stupidity; there was the proof I was nothing but a streaked ninnyhammer of the rankest breed. There stood the slot as my accuser, the witness whose testimony should send me to a home for incurable imbeciles.

While it was true that for twenty-five or fifty feet it was impossible for me to get between the trees, yet it was also true that by the distance of one hundred feet there was ample space for my passage. It would have taken time, of course, to have climbed up and down between each pair of trees. Ah, greater evidence of my moon-eyed condition. By climbing to the limbs I might

have run like a squirrel from one tree to another the entire distance.

It is nothing to my credit I should have been compelled to have jumped several rods through the air between two trees, for my mental sagacity had not got so far as that. I felt humiliated beyond expression. Never before had I been compelled to call on the forces of Nature to help me out of a difficulty. It would be the last time. There was consolation in that.

However, it was best as it was, for there might have been a question whether or not climbing the trees would have been leaving the path.

Nevertheless, I turned from the scene in a state of complete disgust, absolutely forgetting I had had not a morsel to eat since the prior morning. This was brought back with all its pain by the sight of the style of a house with which I had become familiar. I suffered not this time my natural diffidence to retard me from entering without ceremony and taking possession of the only chair at the table. Neither could I resist taking a short nap after the meal, for I had slept anything but comfortably; and should not have slept at all but from complete exhaustion.

XXII

I continue to proceed and outwit an immense giant; escape from a herd of angry cattle; scale a water fence; meet a friendly spider.

WHEN I arose from my siesta I observed the dame in charge of the caravansary was less dumb than the others I had met, and that her countenance bore evidence of the passing over it of a late smile or two. The faces of the others were so placid a really pleasant emotion would have slipped up on them had it attempted to cross their countenances.

These were my meditations as I passed along my way.

My late experiences had not dimmed my ardor in the least, and the refreshment both of victuals and of sleep had restored me to a very vigorous condition. So high-spirited was I that when I came to an immense giant sitting on a stump by the pathside, I was not in the least abashed or flustered. He was forming a toothpick by the aid of a pocket knife which would have answered

me quite well for a sword, and he glanced at me quite merrily out of the corner of his eye.

Now, while I was not a giant in stature, I was not by any means this man's inferior in real strength, as will be shown by the following incident.

I bade him good-day, and after conversing with him for a time I made as if to go on, when he said I should have to kill him first.

I told him it was against the rules to kill any living thing within the enclosure, and his reply was quite to the point; for he said I would never pass on then.

I told him I thought I should go right on about my business, just as though I had not had the honor of his acquaintance; that I did not consider he could possibly prevent me from doing just as I liked. But such talk aside, he was not so strong or powerful as he undoubtedly thought he was; that he had plenty of bulk, I was willing to admit, but it was nothing else—it had no life in it.

This he did not agree with; but I insisted I was right, for I was sure I could outrun him, or outjump him, and do anything requiring quickness better than he could.

He only grinned.

I told him he certainly must admit I could jump higher than he could in proportion to my height.

I stood in the middle of the path, and springing nimbly upward, caught a branch of the tree and brought it down with me, being exceedingly careful not to pluck a leaf from it.

The limb next above that one was several good feet higher and quite strong enough to sustain his weight should he reach it, as I knew he quite well could.

The temptation was too great for him, and so he walked backward, to keep it in view all the time, to where I had stood, and stooping gave a very fine leap, in which he caught the branch all well enough, and I likewise caught his feet and ran swiftly in the direction in which I wished to go, a sufficient distance to bring him his full length on the ground, which he struck with sufficient force to stun or daze him, and he was not aware of my escape until I was too far away for him to overtake me, and I saw no more of him.

My ears next caught a sound which turned out to be the bellowing of a herd of cattle, coming

at a terrific speed down my path. There were several hundred of them, according to the count I made of them as they were passing me, and they were in very much of a hurry and frightfully excited, one old bull in the lead having his head down, uttering dreadful cries and snorting viciously.

They would quickly be upon me, and they were so thick and dense I could not squeeze to one side and let them pass without being trod upon.

My presence of mind saved me from an awful death; a few seconds longer of delay on my part and I should have been crushed by their horrid hoofs. In those few seconds I grasped a sapling, bent its top into the path, took a firm hold and let go the other hand, swinging clear of their heads and horns just in the nick of time.

And my new dilemma was as great as the one I had safely passed. The leaves were so thick and so were the little branches, it became a very serious matter to fall to the ground without carrying with me a leaf or two or a twig or so. I was satisfied I could not escape such a catastrophe, and was about to resign myself to my fate, when a most peculiar thing happened.

A mammoth spider was spinning his web among the branches above my head, and his web was like linen thread. A happy thought came into my mind, and I was about to put it into execution when I saw he had stretched a thread across the path and I had disarranged this when I had bent down the tree, and he was now about to repair the damage. The best of it all was his main line was quite within my reach, along which he was just then traveling.

He belonged to a distinct species, specimens of which I have not seen since, for he spun five threads at a time. His progress was not very rapid, for he braided the threads together as he went.

He reached the other side, and after having made fast the end of his braid or rope, he came just as slowly back, leaving another line trailing behind.

When he reached a point just above me and had securely fastened his line by wrapping it several times around a good limb, and glueing it, I began to tease him with a small branch that I twisted around for the purpose, and he became so enraged he lost his hold and fell to the ground.

I quickly snipped the line which he had spun in his descent, pulled myself up to his rope bridge, along which I went hand over hand until I reached the middle of the path, where I swayed up and down until I could let go and drop to the ground without injury, which I did, quite glad of my escape from certain death; for so read the rule, and I could have come down in no other way without bringing with me many leaves and some twigs.

In a short time I came to a stop, as the path had done the same. I could not determine where it continued, for there was a very respectable waterfall into which it led, and over which, or rather up which, it undoubtedly went. No man could swim or climb that torrent of water; but mount it I must, for there was no path leading in any other direction.

I sat for a long time with my feet in the water, having removed my boots for the purpose, as my feet were hot from the long walk; but I could not concoct any scheme for scaling the water fence.

I was just dropping into a doze, when I heard a splashing below me and saw some great sturgeon preparing to shoot the falls. It took me no time

at all to wade into the water, and as a big one shot by, grasp him by his caudal fin, and I was up the chute before I had time to breathe. In fact, the transit was so sudden it was quite a spell before I got my breath back again; but I did it just in time to save myself from being swept back, for the great fish had shaken me loose when we had barely passed the verge.

But I had left my boots below, and I could never enter the presence of the Princess barefoot. So I secured them in this manner:

Disengaging one of the rope-walks of the giant spider I fastened one end to a long stone of such size and shape as when I threw it into the leg of the boot it stuck tight, and I was enabled to draw it up. I got the first one easily enough, but was less fortunate with the second, for as I was pulling it over the fall, a fish swallowed it, thinking it was some bait intended for him, and I had a very severe struggle with him. Had it not been for the strength of my rope I should have lost my boot; but the fish, evidently becoming convinced he would be delayed too long if he remained until he had his meal, peacefully coughed up the boot and went on.

XXIII

I offer a few suggestions and relate other experiences which happened after I had reached the palace for which I had so long been striving, where I meet the "sweetest woman ever born," whose husband I have the honor of becoming.

I HAVE but a few more incidents to relate, and I beg the pardon of the reader for offering here a suggestion or two as to his course on finishing the book. I trust he will not shy it into a corner of the room, or cast it forth through the window. It would give me less pain if he will lay it down softly. I say this as its contents are part of myself—they came from my brain, and any undue shaking up he may thus give me would be shocking to my atoms and therefore repugnant to my "piece" of mind.

If he has been amused, it would be but a gracious act to loan the book to a friend that he also may be amused; if he has been entertained, the part of the host is unfulfilled unless he also entertain his guests. If, however, he be disgusted,

he may wreak his vengeance by loaning the book to some one against whom he has a grudge.

My pleasure has been conserved in the occupation of writing these lines; for it is somewhat of a relief to have such a quantity of material off my mind; but I sincerely shall regret it should it rest heavily on the mind of another; therefore, if such a consummation come, do as I have done—tell the stories to others.

Craving suspension of punishment for this diversion from the adventures, I return to them.

I found myself passing through the outer wall of the palace enclosure, and discovered a number of women on the lawn, of whom I made bold to inquire if the princess were at home. They nodded assent. I then put another question, as to where I might have the honor of kneeling in her presence, and they looked at me with wondering eyes. I was, for the first time in my life, somewhat abashed, and one of the maids went so far in taking pity on me that she told me the princess was in her secret chamber.

I had hoped my troubles were at end, and still I could not comprehend very serious difficulties

could cross me in learning the whereabouts of this secret chamber, now that I was within the very walls of the palace and at liberty to do as I pleased within the restrictions of the rules.

So, I looked about me and observed several doors through either of which I might enter. They were all alike with a single exception; a pair of wrens had built a nest upon the arch of one of them, and through this arch I made my way, for did I not pass beneath an emblem of love in so doing?

The passage, for a distance, was dark and narrow, then widening into a spacious and well-lighted hallway. I then came to a rotunda, out of which were several passages, each of which I inspected most carefully, as I did not intend to fail at this close proximity to the goal.

One of them was floored and walled with red-hot bricks for such a distance even if I ran with my greatest speed I should perish by their heat before I reached the end; and yet, I was positive this was the way to the secret chamber.

There was a splendid fountain playing into a large basin in the center of the rotunda, and to this I made my way. I could remember nothing

in the rules that forbade my wetting myself most thoroughly; indeed, had there been I had broken them already. I therefore lay down in the basin until I was completely saturated. I also soaked my mantle and wrapped it about my head, leaving but a small hole through which I could keep my direction. Dripping with moisture I made a dash for the heated passage, ran with my utmost speed through it; but so hot was it, when I had reached the end of it, I was as dry as a bone, but not even a hair was scorched.

I was now in another rotunda, in which was a magnificent table on which were many jars filled with perfume and oils. Like the previous rotunda there were several passages leading from this, one of which seemed to be in process of repair, as I at first thought. Upon mature deliberation, however, I determined it was specially prepared and that I must overcome it to reach the secret chamber. Its floor was covered several inches deep with pitch of the most tenacious kind, and I was certain did I put my boot down firmly on it, it would in all probability remain right there; for so adhesive was this pitch it could not let go when it had once taken hold.

As was my custom, I sat down and contemplated it for a few moments; then arose, went to the table, selecting therefrom a bottle of very heavy oil. With this I anointed my boots from the soles to above the ankles, knowing the pitch would not adhere to oil of such consistency.

I thereupon traversed the passage and entered another rotunda.

It occurred to me there were a great many rotundas; I afterward learned there was one at each corner of the palace; that all were alike, and that had I taken any but the one I did I should have come back into the open air very shortly.

The outgoing passage I selected from this place was paved with needles about three inches long and so sharp and thin as to quickly penetrate any substance but metal. Now, I had no metal about me, and nothing else that would endure these points.

So, down I sat again for contemplation. I examined the needles with care, and found they had heads to them like tacks, and of a good surface; that the heads rested on plates of metal, the bodies of the needles going up through holes

in other pieces of metal; thus they could not tip over, and so firmly were they fixed they resisted all my efforts to remove them.

To one side of this entrance there was a niche, and in this niche there was a basket; and in this basket I found a great many needle-tacks like those in the floor, probably left there by the workman on finishing his job. There was also a chisel, an awl, and a hammer in this basket; and it proved a short piece of labor to rip up the under soles of my boots, insert a goodly number of the needle-tacks, and fasten the soles down again. Thus, by walking on my toes, I easily made my way through the passage, as the needles in my soles were of the same length as the needles in the floor, therefore those in the floor could not penetrate my feet.

Entering another rotunda, I found the floor of such delicate mosaic I immediately sat down and removed the needles from my boots lest I damage it.

All the passages from this rotunda left it on a level, save one, which went up at an angle of forty-five degrees, and was paved with such smooth tiles I could not keep my foothold, and was forced to sit down and meditate.

I hit on a plan which succeeded admirably.

I was six feet and over tall, and could reach a good eighteen inches above my head. Now, the passage was but seven feet wide. So I lay down across it, and by pressing against the sides with my feet and hands, I rolled myself to the top of the incline.

I had no more than raised myself to my feet when the sweetest ripple of laughter I had ever heard greeted my ears, and there came toward me with outstretched hands the most radiant creature I ever beheld. Such superb carriage; such a graceful form; such delicious lips, between which showed such pearly teeth; such a sweet, sweet face; such glorious hair; and such dear eyes. I would have folded her at once to my bosom, but she seemed too pure and precious for mortal hands.

But she would not we should be strangers longer; nor were we.

She caused a great banquet to be given, and I was surprised to find among the guests so many men of renown; even the hermit was there. But my princess made it all clear when they were all assembled, by saying:

"Gentlemen: I desire to express to you my profoundest respect. You have one and all striven earnestly for my hand; but some obstacle in the way of each proved insurmountable, save in one instance.

"One of my rules said instant death would be meted out to any who disobeyed them. This was prescribed that your utmost exertion might be put forth, and for that alone, for you observe that not one of you has met death. When one of you fell by the way, he was immediately taken in charge, and has fared as handsomely since as it has been in my power to permit him to do.

"There is one among you who has not failed in a single instance, nor has he faltered on the way, as you all know, for since your own failed, each of you has witnessed the efforts of all later ones.

"And it is this one who is now to be given the opportunity of accepting or rejecting my hand. I know I can not only trust myself but my kingdom in his hands, for no circumstance can be so difficult he will not understand and triumph over it.

"I now have the pleasure of offering my hand, my throne, and my fortune to Monk Chawson, and I leave the matter with him."

Such a deafening applause as rent the air when she resumed her throne was there as to set my nerves vibrating uncomfortably. My words would not come to utterance. I therefore arose from my place at the farther end of the table and went to where she sat.

There I knelt at her feet. Then, and only then, could I speak. I said something to this effect:

"Dear Princess: Man may not know such honor but once. No man can hope to have beside him forever another being equal to thyself. It can be the joy of but one man to have such a companion; for there is but one. To such a woman a man may ever be a lover; for his life must be all sunshine and delight.

"If then you will accept me as thy constant companion through this life, receive my promise to guard you and protect you in any and all emergencies."

She stepped down from her throne and knelt beside me. A holy monk came forward and performed the ceremony which made my life overflowing with happiness.

Though years have passed since that eventful day, her beauty has not dimmed; the luster of

her eyes is still powerful; the sweetness of her disposition has grown in grandeur.

As we gaze on the children at play, we clasp each other's hands in that sweet rapture only known to those who truly love and are as truly loved.

May your lot be as pleasant as mine, dear reader!

I must add that every one of the knights and gentlemen who made the attempt to find the secret chamber found within the household of my princess some beautiful woman who reciprocated his affections. So that our palace contains a retinue unequaled for valor and renown, and there is growing up around us an army of robust children whose merry laughter and pretty pranks fill us all with continual joy.

Success nearly always crowns the efforts of the venturesome. The failure of an adventure is always chronicled with glaring head-lines, thus proving the above assertion. At all events, I was certainly for pushing into anything mysterious, with the result of final triumph.

My dear reader, may your adventures end as fortunately as have mine.

the end